A Short History of English Literature

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BY

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PREFACE

This *Short History of English Literature* gives a brief account of the lives and works of some two hundred and fifty of the most eminent English poets, prose writers, dramatists, and novelists. Literature is a personal thing; and it is not possible to understand it without some knowledge of the men and women who wrote it. Many Histories of Literature devote much of their limited space to discussions of Tendencies, Influences, Schools of Thought, and other similar abstract ideas; but, after all, the great works of literature were written by men of flesh and blood, not by mere abstractions; and more light is often thrown upon an author by a knowledge of his life than by speculations about whether he did or did not imitate some obscure foreign writer, or by disquisitions on the Tendencies of Thought in his day. If this small book seems to over-emphasize the personal side of literature, and neglect some of the theories which find such ample treatment in larger and more ambitious works, this is its deliberate policy, adopted in an attempt to redress the balance.

A knowledge of the social and political history of England is certainly necessary as a background for the study of English literature, but it is best to derive such knowledge from history books. Nothing is gained by interlarding a sketch of English literature with inadequate paragraphs on subjects which have been handled competently and at length by many historians.

To cover so wide a field in three hundred small pages has called for the use of every legitimate device of com-

pression, including the omission of many authors who, with all due respect, are mere museum-pieces. But this book has not, like one of its predecessors, disposed of Shakespeare in a single sentence, by saying that " A study of Shakespeare, who refuses to be crushed within the limits of a general essay, is no part of its plan ". A study of English literature without Shakespeare resembles the mythical but proverbial performance of *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

Dean Swift, the prince of ironists, says that the most accomplished way of using books is " to serve them as some men do lords, learn their titles exactly, and then brag of their acquaintance ". This unassuming book is not intended to foster knowledge of this kind; it is meant to supplement rather than to supplant the study of our great writers. A first-hand acquaintance with a dozen or so of our best authors is worth more than an encyclopedic knowledge of all the books about books that have ever been written.

R. F. PATTERSON.

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PROLOGUE

"Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end; then stop." This excellent piece of advice, which was given by the King of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*, may well be borne in mind by anyone who undertakes to write a Short History of English Literature. But the question at once arises, "Where does English Literature really begin?"

For many years, indeed for many generations, the answer to this question was that it began with Chaucer. Then a new school of thought arose and asserted that Anglo-Saxon was really English; that in fact the term "Anglo-Saxon" should be abolished and the expression "Old English" substituted for it; and that English Literature had existed twice as long as had usually been stated, having had an existence of twelve hundred years, instead of a mere six hundred.

Now the pendulum has swung again in the opposite direction. It has been said that English Literature before Chaucer can be divided into two categories: (*a*) that which is literature but not English, and (*b*) that which is English but not literature. Every pungent remark of this kind is a little bit untrue, but this epigram is at least as true as most. It is really only by means of unnaturally straining the meaning of the word that Anglo-Saxon can be called English. An Englishman who does not know Anglo-Saxon might run his eye over a page of Anglo-Saxon poetry and fail to recognize a single word. Anglo-Saxon prose is slightly less unlike the English of to-day; a modern reader might

little is known about Cynewulf, and Cædmon is no longer considered to have been the author of the poems which for long were attributed to him. *Elene*, the story of the finding of the Cross by St. Helena, and *The Fates of the Apostles* are both attributed to Cynewulf. The three most remarkable poems, however, no matter who wrote them, are: one to which scholars have given the uninspired name of *Genesis B*; *The Dream of the Rood*; and *Judith*. *Genesis B* is a poem on the Fall of Man, and is clearly the work of a good poet. In *The Dream of the Rood* the Cross of Christ is made to speak, giving an account of its early days in the woods, and of the Crucifixion. *Judith* is a vivid and dramatic reconstruction of the story told in the Apocrypha.

It is unfortunate that most translations of Anglo-Saxon poetry are unsatisfactory. A translation of poetry into prose is always something in the nature of a compromise, and never quite adequate; and (in spite of the alleged continuity of the language) Anglo-Saxon poetry is ill-adapted for rendering into English verse. A verse rendering of, say, *Beowulf* is apt to sound unnatural and stilted, while a prose version is apt to suggest the curious clipped style which we employ when writing telegrams. The ordinary reader will have to accept untested the opinion of scholars that there are fine poems in Anglo-Saxon.

Anglo-Saxon prose is of great linguistic and historical interest, but it is much less highly developed than Anglo-Saxon poetry. Almost all of it that is of value was written under the direction of King Alfred (849–901) or by his own hand. *The Pastoral Care* of Gregory the Great was translated for the use of the clergy, and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* was translated for its general importance. Orosius, a dull Spanish writer of universal history, was extremely popular in Alfred's

day; in his translation of Orosius the king inserted the narratives of two contemporary travellers, Ohthere and Wulfstan, which are of the greatest interest. Alfred also translated *The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius, a famous book which was afterwards translated by Chaucer and by Queen Elizabeth. He also inaugurated the compilation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which was continued for more than two hundred and fifty years after his death. As might be expected in a work of this nature, the *Chronicle* varies greatly in fullness and in literary skill; sometimes it is rather dry and bald in its style, while at other times it is vividly and skilfully written.

Between Alfred's and Chaucer's days much was written which is of interest to students of language and antiquities, but little that is worth reading for its own sake. Mention may be made of a charming though rather difficult poem of almost 1800 lines called *The Owl and the Nightingale*, written in Dorsetshire about the middle of the thirteenth century; and of some short lyrical poems of unknown date and authorship but of great beauty, and displaying that lightness of touch and liveliness of manner which are so conspicuously absent from Anglo-Saxon poetry.

CHAPTER I

POETRY FROM CHAUCER TO 1660

With Chaucer English poetry makes a true and glorious beginning. Some of his rather dull predecessors, whose names are not mentioned here, might lead us to expect that better things were to come, but there is nothing in their writings which indicates the advent of

a great genius like Chaucer. For Chaucer is not merely a pioneer who did admirable work considering the conditions in which he wrote; in our long line of great poets he stands among the first three or four. No other English poet can tell a story better, and none is his equal for displaying a sly unobtrusive humour. In the music of his verse not even Spenser, not even Tennyson can be ranked as more than his compeer.

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400) was born in London. His father was a well-to-do vintner with some influence in court circles. As a young man Chaucer was appointed page to the Duke of Clarence, and he took part in the campaign of 1359 in France, being taken prisoner by the French and ransomed by Edward III. He subsequently became an esquire of the royal household, and on several occasions went abroad on important diplomatic missions, visiting Genoa, Flanders, France and Lombardy. He was also what we would now call a high official in the Civil Service, for he was appointed Controller of the Customs of Wool in the Port of London, and subsequently Controller of Petty Customs. He was also Clerk of the King's Works and Forester of North Petherton Park. He lived to see the accession of Henry IV, the son of his old friend and patron John of Gaunt, but he did not long enjoy the prosperity which the new reign brought him, for he died on 25th October, 1400, and was buried in what is now known as Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

From his poems we learn that he was a portly figure, that he frequently wore an absent-minded look, that he did not lightly enter into conversation with strangers, that he was a great lover of books, and that spring-time and good weather made him leave his studies to enjoy the beauties of nature.

Chaucer's education and experiences fitted him to

become a poet of a kind too rare in these islands. He *had fought as a soldier and travelled as a diplomatist in* foreign countries, and so had shaken off that spirit of insularity which too frequently leads Englishmen astray. He was more a man of affairs than any other English poet of anything approaching equal eminence; he writes always in the broad-minded, tolerant manner of a thorough man of the world.

Most of Chaucer's early works are translations or adaptations from the French. Chaucer was probably of French extraction; he was accustomed to hear French spoken at court; he was twenty-two years of age when pleadings in the law-courts were first made in English; and he had been in France as a soldier when young and as a diplomatist when older. The most important of his early works is his translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose*, a French poem begun by William de Lorris as a romance, and finished by Jean de Meung as a satire This poem may seem tedious to us, but we must never forget that Chaucer found it enchanting, and wished to share his pleasure with as many as possible. He could not have found a more suitable poem to work upon when learning how to write, and his translation is not only good as an English poem, but, on the whole, faithfully reflects both the letter and the spirit of the original *The Book of the Duchesse*, a tribute to the memory of John of Gaunt's first wife, is another early poem, as are several short pieces and two or three longer poems afterwards fitted into the framework of the *Canterbury Tales*.

After Chaucer had visited Italy and become acquainted with the works of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio his work grew maturer and less imitative *The Parlement of Foules* is a delightful poem written to celebrate the marriage of Richard II and Anne of

account of the history of its manuscript than because of its literary merit. It was for long thought to be irretrievably lost, but in 1895 a manuscript of it was discovered in the University Library at Cambridge. A discovery of this nature always arouses hopes that more of our early literature may still be found. Gower's Latin poem is of no great value, but his English poem, *Confessio Amantis*, is his masterpiece. In it each of the Seven Deadly Sins is subdivided into several branches, and the nature of each is illustrated by a tale—112 tales in all. These tales are drawn from many sources, Ovid being one of the principal contributors of material. Many of the stories are admirably told, though some are marred by prolixity and digressions.

Gower wrote in three languages, which is interesting as it shows that he was uncertain which language of the three was most suitable for literary use. His three poems are alike in being rather too long. His powers of writing verse were strictly limited, and the eight-syllable couplet in which his English poem is written becomes in his hands as monotonous as the ticking of a cheap clock. To bracket Gower and Chaucer together, as was done by many early and some later critics, is even more absurd than to couple Jonson and Fletcher with Shakespeare. Chaucer was a genius, Gower a man of no very great amount of talent. His work, however, helped to establish the standard literary language; he could tell a plain story plainly; and he was a competent if uninspired craftsman.

Chaucer's greatest contemporary and easily the second greatest poet of the fourteenth century was a mysterious man whose name is believed to have been **William Langland** (?1330–1400), and who wrote a remarkable alliterative poem known as *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman*. If the author was

writing fact and not fiction in the account which he gave of himself in his poem, he was a tall, somewhat morose man, who lived in London with his wife and daughter, and who had taken minor orders and supported himself partly by singing in church and partly by making fair copies of legal documents. His poem survives in three versions, differing somewhat widely from each other, and bearing the appearance of being respectively the work of his youth, of his maturity, and of his old age. Some scholars, however, claim to have demonstrated that no fewer than five authors contributed to the poem as we have it; but this view is not generally accepted, and it is more probable that the poem, like Goethe's *Faust*, was kept permanently on the stocks, and belongs to the author's whole life rather than to any particular part of it. The poem relates how William fell asleep on the Malvern Hills and dreamed a wonderful dream. He was in a wide wilderness with a high tower on the east and a deep valley in the west. In the centre was a fair field full of folk. A lady (Holy Church) appeared and explained that the tower was the abode of truth, the valley the abode of death and evil spirits, and the fair field the world. In the world the poet finds all sorts and conditions of men working and wandering, beggars, pilgrims, hermits, friars, knights, minstrels. The poet finds little that is not evil in them; their chief spur to action is love of reward. To improve this state of things men must seek for truth, and accordingly Piers the Plowman enters to show the way. His golden rule is that each man must do his duty in his position of life; but men are naturally lazy, and only the fear of hunger can make them labour. The vision ends without having satisfactorily solved the problem, but with a glimpse of a sort of golden age, when peace and love shall reign over all the earth.

as a purely mechanical operation not unlike that of copying, to which his monkish training may have accustomed him. His *Troy Book* and even his additional Canterbury Tale, *The Story of Thebes*, do not attract many readers; but there is considerable merit in his short sprightly satire, *London Lickpenny*.

Thomas Occleve (1370–1450) was born about the same time as Lydgate, that is to say he was a man of thirty at the time of Chaucer's death. He was in the Privy Seal office, and was a whole-hearted admirer of Chaucer, whom he endeavoured to the best of his ability to imitate. He is a very mediocre writer, with no poetical gifts, no sense of humour, and no control over his metre. His best passages are those in which he talks about himself and depicts the London of his day. One of his manuscripts contains in the margin an admirable coloured likeness of Chaucer.

Lydgate and Occleve died about the middle of the fifteenth century, and **Stephen Hawes** (*d.* 1523), who is usually spoken of as the next English poet to them in point of time, was born a quarter of a century after they died—so barren of poets was that century. His long poem *The Pastime of Pleasure* is as dreary as allegory almost invariably is. He was an admirer of Lydgate, and his chief interest is as a link, though a weak one, between Chaucer and Spenser.

The next English poet of note is **John Skelton** (1460–1529), a graduate of both universities and a clergyman of no great sanctity of life. He was for a time tutor to Prince Henry, afterwards Henry VIII, and spent much of his later life at court. There he fell foul of the all-powerful Cardinal Wolsey, and attacked him in several long and lively poems, written in a peculiarly rapid kind of metre, which he invented. Some of his poems are dignified and commonplace; those written

in his own rude breathless style are good—living poems written in an age of dreary allegory and second- or third-hand observation of life. An attempt has been made in recent years to make out that Skelton was a great writer. The proverb that "a living dog is better than a dead lion" is quite true; but Skelton was something of a scurrilous buffoon, and he has not much to offer the present age either in the way of instruction or of entertainment.

From the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth century the Muse appears to have left England and taken up her habitation in Scotland. **John Barbour** (1316–1395), Archdeacon of Aberdeen, was an elder contemporary of Chaucer's. His great poem *The Brus*, completed about 1376, is Scotland's national epic. It is a romance, not a history; but it has considerable historical value, in spite of certain grave errors, such as that of confusing Bruce with his grandfather. It is written in Scott's favourite metre (eight-syllable couplets) and in a plain style. Barbour shows scrupulous fairness to the English; he was a true patriot but not a bitter hater of his country's enemies. He excels at descriptions, and his battle-scenes are especially good. His poem, quite apart from its great historic value, is a delightful piece of work, all the more so because it is not pretentious. Its language is a little more difficult for a Southerner to understand than that of Chaucer, on account of the northern idiom; to a Scot it presents few difficulties. *The Brus* is a fine narrative poem, and its plainly-told incidents of war and adventure have no small amount of the charm of some of our best ballads, such as those about Robin Hood.

"**Blind Harry**" (*fl.* 1470–1492) is the name traditionally given to the author of the epic about Scotland's other national hero, William Wallace. *The Wallace* was written about a century later than *The*

prologues are perhaps the most interesting pieces of his work, but they are not in keeping with the tone of the great poem in which they are interpolated. His translation is, however, a notable performance, and is of great interest to students of early Scottish language and literature.

Sir David Lindsay (1490–1555), the last of the major Scottish poets of his period, had not great poetical gifts, but is a singularly interesting and attractive man. When the future James V was a few days old Lindsay was appointed his gentleman usher; his duties included tucking him into bed, playing " farces on the floor ", playing on the lute, and telling marvellous tales. When James, at the age of sixteen, took the power into his own hands, he made his old friend and playmate Lyon King of Arms, or chief herald, and knighted him. Lindsay wrote many poems of a satirical nature, and a very amusing morality play, *A Satyre of the Three Estaitis*. He had command over all the less delicate kinds of laughter; his verse is easy and sparkling, and his eye for stage " business " was an acute one. One of the best of his other poems is *Squyer Meldrum*, a curious blend of romance and realism; it is a romance dealing with the life of a contemporary and neighbour of Lindsay, and is pleasant to read.

The two heralds of a new school of English literature, a school which admired and imitated the poets of Italy, were **Sir Thomas Wyatt** (1503–1542) and the **Earl of Surrey** (1517–1547). They were both men of high birth, and courtiers; and their names are usually linked together on that account and because much of their work was printed in a book known as *Tottel's Miscellany*, published in 1557. As a matter of fact, they were not friends, much less collaborators; and the work of one bears little resemblance to the work of the other. Wyatt

was educated at Cambridge, held several important offices at court, and served in several embassies abroad. He was the first patrician to write poetry in England, and was the founder of the courtly school, which followed Italian models. He had "the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword" and was "the glass of fashion and the mould of form". Poetry was only one of his many accomplishments, and he probably set no high value on his own verses. He introduced the personal note into poetry, and wrote many poems which are lovely in themselves, besides being of interest as the first strains of a new kind of music. He was also the first Englishman to write sonnets, a form of verse which he learnt from the Italian poet Petrarch. Surrey was a son of the Duke of Norfolk, and was a privileged courtier, being at one time almost chosen as a husband for Princess (afterwards Queen) Mary. He was beheaded at the age of thirty on a trumped-up charge of treason. He was a spoilt child of fortune, and was petulant, self-willed, and proud. He lived in an atmosphere of tournaments and courts of love, and there is an artificial element in much of his poetry. He is sweeter than Wyatt but not so strong; his improved workmanship does not altogether atone for his lack of robustness Surrey invented or inaugurated the English form of the sonnet, the form which Shakespeare afterwards used. He was also the first Englishman to write in blank verse, the metre in which so much of our greatest poetry, epic and dramatic, was afterwards written He translated the Second and Fourth Books of Virgil's *Aeneid* into this metre, which he described as "a straunge meter"

The most attractive figure among Queen Elizabeth's courtiers, the man who shone as soldier, statesman, and diplomatist, was also eminent as poet, romance-writer, and critic. **Sir Philip Sidney** (1554–1586) was the son

and died there on the 16th January, 1599, as the result of the hardships he had come through.

All Spenser's poems reveal the same qualities, a noble idealism expressing itself at times in a vein of mordant satire, a rich but wonderfully pure and delicate sensuousness, a versification whose melody and sweetness seem inexhaustible. The fullest representative of all these qualities is *The Faerie Queene*, which is one of the noblest poems in the language. Its chief fault is that it contains too much allegory, and that we meet in it no plain men and women. It is too far removed from men's business and bosoms.

Spenser was at once recognized as the greatest English poet since Chaucer. Lamb called him "a poet's poet"; those who have been spiritually influenced by him are innumerable; the imitators of the beautiful stanza which he invented include Thomson, Burns, Campbell, Byron, Shelley, and Keats.

Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson are dramatists first and foremost, and their plays, which will be dealt with in Chapter III, have somewhat eclipsed the importance of their poetry. Yet their non-dramatic poetry deserves a brief mention in the present chapter. **Marlowe's** (1564–1593) youthful translations of Ovid and Lucan are commonplace, but in his *Hero and Leander*, which is a recasting rather than a paraphrase of a minor Greek poem, he has written one of the greatest poems of that great age. Among his shorter poems "Come live with me and be my love" is, as Walton called it, "choicely good".

Hero and Leander was imitated by **Shakespeare** (1564–1616) in *Venus and Adonis*, which is, however, pale and colourless beside its original. *Lucrece*, a companion-piece also dedicated to the young Earl of Southampton, is a maturer but not a more attractive

poem. Both these poems became widely popular, but, had Shakespeare written nothing else, they would be read to-day by only a few literary specialists. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* were written from time to time throughout a number of years and circulated in manuscript among his friends. Many of them, but by no means all, are magnificent poetry; most of them contain memorable phrases, fine single lines, or notable quatrains. It is best to forget all about the controversies which they have aroused, and to read them as pure poetry. All attempts to reconstruct Shakespeare's personal experiences from them have been singularly unsuccessful.

Ben Jonson (1573–1637) wrote a large quantity of verse of various kinds — epigrams, addresses, lyrics, elegies and epistles; little of it, however, is supremely good, though much of it is well-expressed and weighty. Jonson had the true lyric touch but rarely, though his song *Drink to me only with thine eyes* is one of the best-known songs in the language, and his plays and more especially his masques contain many charming songs as delightful though less widely known.

Michael Drayton (1563–1631), though most of his work is little read nowadays, is one of the most venerable and typical of Elizabethan poets. He was born in the year before Shakespeare, and during his long life wrote an astonishing amount of poetry, whose variety is as remarkable as its excellence. He wrote one of the best sonnets, one of the best war-songs (*Agincourt*), the longest topographical poem (*Polyolbion*), and some of the best fairy poetry in the language. He was no mere follower of poetic fashion, yet his poems reflect faithfully the changes which took place in English poetry between 1590 and 1630 He took a lofty view of the dignity and importance of his own calling, and was never a careless workman It is typical of his industry

that, having written a huge historical epic called *Mortimeriados*, he recast it and rewrote it in another metre. *Polyolbion* is a sort of poetical gazetteer of England, written in rhymed Alexandrine couplets. An immense amount of work must have gone to the writing of this poem. It was so planned that perhaps no poet could have made it a delightful whole; Drayton has made of it a competent piece of work with many interesting and some charming passages.

Samuel Daniel (1562–1619) was another careful and conscientious poet. He wrote a collection of sonnets called *Delia*, a long and somewhat prosaic poem on the Wars of the Roses, several masques, and much miscellaneous prose and verse. Few of the greater Elizabethans are less appreciated than Daniel, in spite of the cordial praise which Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt bestowed upon his work. He was not happy in his choice of subjects; his historical poem is neither good history nor good poetry; and his sonnets are imitative. In some of his epistles in verse and in his shorter poems his gifts are seen to better advantage. He was an excellent critic and, what does not always follow, an admirable self-critic. He revised his work not once, but many times. Like Spenser, he has been acclaimed as a "poet's poet", but he is so, perhaps, less on account of the charm of his work than on account of his absolute devotion to the craft of letters.

A curious and singularly original figure in Elizabethan poetry is **John Donne** (1573–1631), whose name is pronounced as if spelt "Dunn". After spoiling a promising career by making a runaway marriage, he took holy orders at the age of forty-two, and six years later became Dean of St. Paul's. Most of his poems were written before he was twenty-five years old, but were not printed until more than thirty years later,

though, like many poems of that time, they were widely circulated in manuscript. They have suffered somewhat from the gap which lay between their composition and their publication. Many poems by other hands were fathered on Donne, and his genuine poems are frequently corrupted. But when all possible allowance is made for textual errors, his style still remains involved and crabbed, and his metre is now and then far from melodious. Sometimes he can write as clearly and tersely as any of his contemporaries; but often he is laboured and difficult. He was the founder and leader of that school of poetry which Dr. Johnson not very aptly named "metaphysical". The chief vices of this school were affectation and a desperate attempting to be clever at all costs. Donne, however, should not be blamed for the faults of his imitators; some of his love-poems are the most remarkable of their kind in the language. His *Songs* are mostly real songs, intended to be set to music and sung. His *Elegies* are more typical of his strange and contradictory genius. *The Progress of the Soul* is an incomplete and sombre poem on the transmigration of souls. *The Storm* and *The Calm* are among the best of Donne's *Letters*. His sacred poems are of great excellence. Donne has never been a popular poet, in the true sense of that word, but his admirers have always admired him with fervour, and his curious restless genius made a special appeal to the dissatisfied survivors of the 1914–18 war.

One of the most charming of Elizabethan lyrical poets is **Thomas Campion** (*d.* 1619) whose name was almost forgotten until A. H. Bullen edited his works in 1889. Campion was a physician by profession, and a poet and composer of music in his leisure hours. It is seldom that "music and sweet poetry agree" as they do in his poems, because it is seldom that poet and

musician are combined in one person. Sometimes, doubtless, he set his words to music, and at other times he wrote words to fit some air that was running through his head; as is natural, poems of the former kind are superior to the others. But all his poems are good, his sacred pieces no less so than the others. As a writer of lyrics Campion is original, fresh, spontaneous, and masterly. The variety of his metres and his absolute command over each kind are remarkable. Campion published a curious prose pamphlet called *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* in which he maintained the "unaptness of rhyme in poesy"; fortunately he did not practise what he preached, for he was himself a master of the art of rhyming.

Throughout the seventeenth century many of the seriously-minded wrote religious poems. One of the greatest writers of poems on sacred subjects was **George Herbert** (1593–1633), who, after being Public Orator at Cambridge University, became rector of the quiet country parish of Bemerton near Salisbury. There he lived a life of saintly piety, rebuilt the church and the parsonage, and did countless deeds of charity. His volume of poems, *The Temple*, was published less than three weeks after his death, and was edited by his friend Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding. These poems give us clearly the history of Herbert's soul; they faithfully mirror the earnestness of his piety and the intensity of his religious feeling. They are, however, disfigured by too much ingenuity and too many tricks of style; the influence of the "metaphysical" school of poetry is too clearly to be seen. Herbert, though his range is somewhat narrow, was a careful workman, and his passionate love for music probably increased the tunefulness of his lines. But he was artificial and too clever; sometimes he even wrote "pattern poems"—

poems in the shape of a pair of wings, an altar, and so on. Very few of his poems are flawless, but the beauty of his character has made many of his readers forget the conceits and extravagances of his muse.

Henry Vaughan (1622–1695), a Welsh medical practitioner, wrote many mystical religious poems of great beauty. Vaughan styled himself "the Silurist", because he was born in Brecknockshire, where the ancient British tribe of the Silures formerly flourished; the rather odd epithet has attached itself more or less permanently to his name. He published two somewhat uninspired volumes of secular verse before issuing his celebrated collection of religious poems, *Silex Scintillans*. There is no doubt that Vaughan's change from being a commonplace secular poet to being a lofty if unequal sacred poet was due to two causes, a serious illness and the influence of Herbert. Yet Herbert's influence on Vaughan, though profound, must on the whole be reckoned as general, not particular, in spite of several passages of direct imitation to be found in the younger poet. Herbert was a pious Anglican priest, Vaughan a Welshman and a mystic who lived a retired life in a world of his own, peopled by his own imaginings. He is much less fantastic than Herbert or Crashaw, and at his best is better than the former and almost as good as the latter. For many years, especially in the eighteenth century, his reputation was low; now he is generally recognized as one of the ablest poets of his generation and one of the best writers of sacred poetry in English.

Richard Crashaw (1613–1649) was the son of a Puritan minister whose violent anti-Roman Catholic views may have helped eventually to drive the poet from the Church of England to the Church of Rome. He was obliged to fly to the Continent, where he eventually became an attendant in the suite of Cardinal [illegible]

ough the press, but it is mainly due to the fact that did not take his art (or, for that matter, his life) very iously. The wonder is that he wrote so much as he d, and that some of it is as good as it is. In his best-nown songs, such as "Out upon it! I have loved" and Why so pale and wan, fond lover?" his tunefulness, nerriment, and impudence are irresistible.

Another Cavalier poet, **Colonel Richard Lovelace** (1618–1658), who died in poverty and misery two years before the Restoration, wrote a great amount of over-elaborate and not very pleasing verse, but made his name famous by writing two short poems which every-one knows, *Going to the Wars* and *To Althea, fron* t *Prison*. His reputation is entirely out of proportion to the merits of the bulk of his writings. This is due to several causes. His varying fortunes illustrated most forcibly the splendours and miseries of a cavalier's life. He has been regarded as a typical cavalier, "an extra-ordinary handsome man, but proud", a brave and chivalrous soldier, the Sidney of his age. His very name has a romantic sound, and was taken by Richardson (see Chapter VII) when christening the hero or villain of *Clarissa*. Moreover he had the good fortune to write half a dozen poems of great excellence, some of which have found their way into most anthologies. Most of Lovelace's poems out-do Donne in being over-elaborate, unintelligible, and full of obscure conceits. He does not merely make a woeful ballad to his mis-tress's eyebrow, but works his way methodically through her attire. He is not, as is sometimes said, a mere trifler; he is serious and earnest in much of his work His faults are not due to carelessness or levity, but t dullness and lack of taste. But his few good poems a so good that the immortality which they have conferr upon him is not undeserved.

By far the most charming of the Cavalier poets, however, is **Robert Herrick** (1591–1674), who stands apart from the others, as he was not a courtier nor of aristocratic stock. Herrick's father was a goldsmith who threw himself from an upper window of his house when Herrick was little more than a year old. Herrick was educated at Cambridge, and, after studying law to little purpose, took holy orders at a much more advanced age than is usual. Soon after, at the age of thirty-eight, he was presented to the living of Dean Prior, a lonely place in Devonshire. He bemoaned his fate in leaving behind the gaieties of the capital and the society of Ben Jonson, whose "son" he had long been. But he seems soon to have settled down to a quiet and happy life in the country, and it is certainly to his country life that we owe the most exquisite of his poems. He never married, but lived a contented life surrounded by pets of various kinds, and faithfully cared for by his maid Prudence Baldwin. He delighted in the quaint rural customs which he saw all around him, and some of his most charming poems celebrate such things as May Day festivities, harvest home, and Christmas mumming. Herrick was a sturdy Royalist, and accordingly was evicted in 1647 to make way for one Dr. Syms, a Puritan In the following year he published his only volume of poems, entitled *Hesperides*, the final section of which, *Noble Numbers*, contained his religious poems. Two years after the Restoration he had the satisfaction of ousting Dr. Syms from Dean Prior, where he died twelve years later at the advanced age of eighty-three.

There are few poets more charming than Herrick, and few who stand less in need of the labours of a commentator. His work is all self-explanatory and beautifully lucid. He was an enthusiastic admirer of the Greeks and Romans, admiring them as a kindred spirit

rather than as a scholar, and imitating their manner as well as their matter. He frequently imitated Martial, but he is daintier and more spontaneous than the Roman poet. The studious lack of arrangement, the "sweet disorder" in the twelve hundred poems which comprise *Hesperides*, is probably modelled on Catullus, as the book in other respects is carefully edited, and punctiliously acknowledges its classical imitations by italicizing them. Yet Herrick, in spite of many reminiscences of the ancients, is essentially original. Everything that he borrowed he made his own. He owed a debt, too, to Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Campion, but especially to Ben Jonson. He was the first-born of the tribe of Ben, but had little to learn from his "father". Herrick, following the spirit of the ancients, could reach heights to which Jonson, sometimes unduly hampered by the letter, could not attain. Herrick's spontaneity, however, is deceptive. Close scrutiny can detect traces of careful workmanship even in those pieces which seem most unpremeditated. He was a perfect master of metre, and experimented with many new forms of it, nearly always successfully. He also had faultless taste in selecting the inevitable word. In his poems of country life he shows himself a true lover of nature. In his love-poems he is charming and dainty, though perhaps not over-serious, as his lady-loves number at least fourteen, and most of them, if not all, were lay-figures. In his fairy-poems he appears as the poet laureate of the court of Oberon and Titania. His *Noble Numbers* help us to understand his strong personality, and are full of manly and practical piety. *Hesperides* was curiously neglected at the time of its appearance, but from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards Herrick's reputation has steadily grown, and he is now almost universally recognized as the greatest of the Cavalier lyrists.

A poet whose best work was written before the Restoration, and who, therefore, finds a place in this chapter, is Andrew Marvell (1621–1678). Marvell was a Yorkshireman who was educated at Cambridge, and afterwards enlarged his mind by spending four years in continental travel. He held several posts as tutor in noble families, and eventually became assistant Latin secretary to the government, Milton, the principal secretary, being now totally blind. His duties naturally brought him into close contact with Milton; he proved himself to be an able man of affairs, as well as an accomplished poet. Not long before King Charles's return he was elected member of Parliament for Hull, and he continued to hold this seat until his death. Marvell's career was comparatively little affected by the Restoration, for although he was a keen republican he was a strong supporter of law and order, and believed in the will of the majority prevailing. In his public life he was an upright and honourable Englishman, a staunch friend, a generous foe, and a capable man of business. As a literary man, his chief characteristic is his versatility. He could write beautiful lyrics and odes, pungent satires, and telling political pamphlets. He is now remembered and loved mainly on account of his early poems, especially his poems upon gardens, in which he shows himself to be a true lover of nature, and of his magnificent *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland*. In his best poems Marvell bears more affinity to the Elizabethans than to the poets of the Restoration. Some of his most attractive poems, it is interesting to note, were originally written by him in Latin and then translated into English.

Abraham Cowley (1618–1667) is a poet who is seldom read nowadays, but who was an important literary figure in his day. He was one of the most

precocious poets on record, and published a small volume of verse at the age of fifteen, while still at Westminster. He had planned out for himself a quiet and contemplative literary life, but his plans were rudely upset by the Civil War. Though a life of practical affairs was not what he desired, he felt it his duty to dedicate his gifts to the Royalist cause, and principally devoted himself to conducting a correspondence in cipher between the king and queen. This was a most exacting and exhausting task, and left him scant leisure for literary work; but he published a collection of love-poems in 1647, and his *Pindarique Odes* nine years later. The odes are faulty productions which owe little to Pindar, but which inaugurated a literary fashion which lasted for over a century. His *Davideis* is an incomplete and unsatisfactory sacred poem. It displays, as does most of Cowley's work, considerable skill and cleverness, but not many of the higher qualities of poetry.

Few poetical reputations have come through more vicissitudes than Cowley's. In his lifetime he was considered, quite soberly, by men of sound judgment, as one of the greatest of English poets, and the peer of Pindar and Virgil. To-day he is almost entirely neglected. In most of his poems there are brilliant passages; some, in which he forgets to be clever, are simple, graceful, and entirely successful. His reputation vanished so abruptly mainly because he belonged to a transition period; he fell in too much with the fleeting fashions of his day. Certain writers of the present day might learn a useful lesson from reflecting upon the fate of Cowley's poems.

CHAPTER II

PROSE FROM CHAUCER TO 1660

There is not very much English prose before the time of Chaucer which may be read with ease and pleasure for its own sake. Chaucer (1340–1400) is, of course, first and foremost a poet; but he was also an all-round man of letters, and he has left us some prose writings which have a charm and importance of their own. The longest and most important of these is his translation of the Latin writer Boethius's *On the Consolation of Philosophy*. This book, which is seldom read nowadays, was of the first importance in the Middle Ages, and was translated by two of our greatest monarchs, Alfred and Elizabeth, before and after Chaucer. Chaucer has rendered even the "Metres" in prose. Chaucer's version is workmanlike, but his prose is less musical and flexible than his verse. Chaucer also wrote a *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, an instrument formerly used for observing the positions of the stars. It was written for his little son Lewis, a child of ten. It is of interest as showing what a tender father Chaucer was to his motherless son, and as illustrating Chaucer's lively interest in science, as well as in poetry, and his ability to write clear explanatory prose, so as to be understood by a child. It is, of course, a technical treatise, without any kind of literary embellishment. Two of the *Canterbury Tales* are written in prose: Chaucer's own *Tale of Melibeus*, a rather old-fashioned discourse, half allegory and half homily, and the *Parson's Tale*, a kind of sermon embodying a treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins and their cure. These two tales are not amongst the most attractive of the series;

but Chaucer's prose style is at least as good as that of any previous writer.

"**Sir John Mandeville**" is the name assumed by the author of a famous book of travels, *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundeville, knight*, which was originally written in French between 1357 and 1371. This book enjoyed a world-wide fame for five centuries before it was discovered that Sir John never lived, and that the author of the *Travels* never travelled, but sat in his library and drew his material from innumerable sources. The real author of the book is not known with complete certainty, but strong cumulative evidence points to one Jean d'Outremeuse, a voluminous writer who lived at Liège. "Mandeville's" work was one of the most popular books of the Middle Ages; it was translated into ten languages, and over 300 manuscripts of it are still extant. If "Mandeville" was not a *bona fide* traveller, his book at any rate travelled widely. Nor is its popularity to be wondered at, for it is quite one of the most delightful of mediæval books; and in its English form it was the first prose work which had a style worthy to be so called, and the first prose work to be written with no other aim than that of entertainment. Many well-known stories and legends owe their origin or popularity to "Mandeville". Prester John, and the Great Cham, the loadstone mountains, the fountain of youth — these and such like are the subjects of his marvellous tales. The author of this wonder-book had mastered two secrets of this kind of writing, secrets which were afterwards used with such good effect by Defoe and Swift. He inserted many corroborative details, which add immensely to the verisimilitude of his writing; and he saw that an extravagant tale gained enormously by being told in a plain, restrained manner. In addition, he had the virtue, rare at all times, almost

unknown in the fourteenth century, of knowing when *he had said enough. The besetting mediæval sin of long*-windedness was not his. There is no doubt that he was a very abandoned person, and that many of his statements erred gravely in the direction of unnecessary extravagance. He lied most unblushingly; he even had the temerity to vex and harass the philologists by inventing and introducing certain sham alphabets; his crowning piece of insolence was to claim for his book that its contents had been approved of and vouched for by the Pope himself! But as the author was well aware of these shortcomings, it is rather humorous to find certain scholars, whose love of scrupulous accuracy is greater than their love of fun, accusing him of "mere adaptation", "plagiarism", "mendacity" and so on. Mandeville is a delicious author, and, in his English dress at any rate, a pure well of refreshment as regards style in a wilderness of pious sermonizings in prose. His courtesy towards his successors is to be recommended; he brings his book to an end lest he should leave nothing for posterity to write about!

Although his own writings are not of the first importance, **William Caxton** (1422–1491) deserves a mention in any History of English Literature, however brief, on account of his influence in popularizing the writings of others. He was born about 1422, and went into business for himself as a mercer at Bruges, where he remained about thirty-three years. About 1471 he appears to have abandoned a commercial life, and entered the service of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy and sister of Edward IV. For her he translated *Le Recueil des Histoires de Troye* from the French. When it was completed there was such a demand for it that Caxton, through the constant copying, found his eyes "dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper" and his

hand "weary and not steadfast". He accordingly set to work to learn the new art of printing just introduced into Bruges by Colard Mansion, and he printed his translation, probably at Bruges, in 1474. This was the first book printed in the English language. Two years later he returned to England, and in 1477 printed at Westminster a translation of *The Dictes and Seyengis of the Philosophres* by Earl Rivers, the King's brother-in-law. This was the first book printed in England. In fourteen years he printed over eighty separate books; over a hundred if second and third editions are counted. Almost all these books are of folio size, and contain in all over 18,000 pages. He himself translated twenty-one books, mainly romances from the French. He also printed Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Hous of Fame*, and translations of Boethius, Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, works of Lydgate, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, *The Golden Legend*, and *The Fables of Æsop*. His types are in the Gothic character, and copied so closely from the handwriting of his time that many of his books have been mistaken for manuscript. In the books which he printed he catered, to a large extent, for noblemen and rich city merchants, the classes with which he was most familiar. He was not a scholar, but a practical man of the world with good taste in books; his press was, like many later undertakings, a compromise between a literary and a commercial venture. He did not print what appealed only to himself, nor did he pander to public taste; he probably gave his public the best of what it wanted. His own contribution to literature consisted mainly of translations, of which the most important is *The Golden Legend*. His likeable personality is most clearly seen in his Prefaces. He had a pleasant sense of humour, partly a gift of Nature and partly a gift of Chaucer,

whom he loved deeply. His style is sometimes slightly involved, but he c [illegible] forward manner. [illegible] energy; a thorough child of this world, he did more for the intellectual and spiritual progress of his country than many less practical idealists.

There can be little doubt that the greatest English book of the fifteenth century is the *Morte d'Arthur*. About its compiler, **Sir Thomas Malory** (*fl.* 1470), we know hardly anything for certain. It is uncertain whether he was an Englishman or a Welshman; there is a faint tradition, based probably upon the choice of subject for his great work, that he was Welsh. There is some slight evidence that he lived at Newbold Revell, in Warwickshire, and that he died on 14th March, 1470.

The *Morte d'Arthur* is one of the greatest compilations in the world. Malory speaks more than fifty times of "the French book" from which he translated, as if he had made use of one book only; but, as a matter of fact, he drew his material from nearly a dozen sources, and made some additions of his own, welding the whole into a fairly harmonious narrative. Now and again there are inconsistencies, especially in the treatment of Gawain, who is virtuous in some books and wicked in others. Scholars who have specialized in the Arthurian cycle warn us that we should not admire Malory too enthusiastically. His book, they say, represents the decadence of Arthurian legend, and he often made use of inferior versions of the stories which he handled This may be true in part; Malory had to use the material which was to hand, and he had not the opportunity, even if he had had the wish, to carry out the elaborate researches in the Arthurian legends which modern scholars have carried out. The ordinary reader, however, whom studies serve principally for delight, will read Malory

and neglect his sources; nay, he will go so far as to think that to prefer Malory's sources to Malory's book is only slightly less absurd than preferring Holinshed to Shakespeare. Malory's fluent and pliant style accounts in part for his charm; he has preserved the spirit of chivalry in an imperishable form; he has turned a fairy-tale which was scarcely Christianized into a magnificent prose epic. He has inspired some of the greatest nineteenth-century poets; Tennyson, Morris, Swinburne, and Arnold all owe a debt to him. There is perhaps no other instance in literary history of what is usually classed as journey-work becoming a masterpiece of literature.

An important work belonging to the first quarter of the sixteenth century is **Lord Berners's** translation of the *Chronicles* of Froissart. John Bourchier, Lord Berners (1467–1533), succeeded to the title at the age of seven, and was well liked by Henry VII and Henry VIII. He played some part in repressing the Perkin Warbeck rebellion; became Chancellor of the Exchequer; was present at the Field of the Cloth of Gold; and became deputy of Calais. Froissart was born 130 years before his translator; his *Chronicles* come down to 1400. Berners's translation is faithful to the spirit of the original and not too close to the letter. It gives a glowing picture of the pomp and pageantry of the Middle Ages.

A very much more important translation than that of Berners or of anyone else is the translation of the Bible. For this the credit belongs to **William Tyndale** (*d.* 1536) more than to any other single man. Tyndale graduated at Oxford but migrated to Cambridge, being attracted there by its reputation as a centre of Greek learning, and by the fame of Erasmus, which lasted longer than his residence there. In 1522 Tyndale, who

was now in priest's orders, became chaplain to Sir John Walsh in Gloucestershire. He involved himself in disputes with the Gloucestershire clergy, and declared his intention of translating the New Testament into English, saying to one of his adversaries, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest". He proceeded to London, and vainly endeavoured to interest Tunstall, Bishop of London, in his project. He set sail for Hamburg in 1524, visited Luther, and had his translation partly printed in quarto at Cologne, but had to fly from this town, and issued his complete translation of the New Testament at Worms in octavo (1525). The greater part was sent to England, and the prelates Warham and Tunstall collected all copies they could seize or purchase and had them burnt. The only fragment of the quarto edition known to exist is preserved in the British Museum. Of the first octavo edition only two copies remain, one in the Baptist College at Bristol, the other (imperfect) in the library of the Chapter of St. Paul's. Revised editions were soon issued by Tyndale himself He also translated the *Pentateuch* and subsequently *Jonah*. In 1535 he was treacherously betrayed by a young English student at Louvain, and, after being imprisoned for over a year at Vilvorde, near Brussels, was found guilty of heresy, degraded from his orders, strangled at the stake, and burnt.

Tyndale was renowned among his contemporaries as a controversialist, but now he is remembered mainly for his translation of the Bible His controversial writings, the chief of which were directed against Sir Thomas More, are acrimonious and peevish in tone, as such writings are wont to be. His translation of the Bible, on the other hand, is almost beyond praise. He

was an accomplished Greek scholar and a competent Hebrew scholar; and had in addition the supreme gift of a magnificent English style, which is popular and lofty at the same time. He was a master of the English language, and by his genius he set a stamp upon that language which has never been obliterated, for the Authorized Version of 1611 was based (though several other versions intervened) upon Tyndale's, and his style and method of translating survive in that version which has the firmest hold on the English people and which has made them a Bible-loving nation. A committee is, even at its best, a many-headed beast without a heart; nor could even such an accomplished body of men as the translators of 1611 have produced their incomparable translation had they not founded it upon a rock — the translation of a single man of genius, William Tyndale.

A lesser but still a noteworthy translator of the Bible was **Miles Coverdale** (1488–1568). It is believed that he assisted Tyndale in his translation. At Antwerp he translated the Bible from German and Latin versions. He revised his version in 1537, and superintended the printing of the "Great Bible" at Paris in 1539, also "Cranmer's Bible" in the following year. For two years he was Bishop of Exeter, but left England when Mary came to the throne. He returned after Elizabeth's accession, but was never restored to his bishopric. Coverdale's exact part in the work of translation has been differently assessed by different scholars, but it was probably large. He was not an accomplished scholar, but was a good translator; his zeal and his literary skill atoned for his lack of verbal scholarship. He was not cast in an heroic mould, as were some of his brother-reformers, nor was he a man of outstanding ability, but he was pious, conscientious, and hard-working, and

played a prominent part in the struggle for religious freedom. His greatest literary monument is the beautiful version of the Psalms in the Church of England Prayer Book.

Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) rose suddenly from being a hard-working college don to being Archbishop of Canterbury because of the prominent part he played in the matter of Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. His Protestant opinions and his support of Lady Jane Grey brought about his downfall when Mary succeeded her half-brother; and he perished at the stake at Oxford in 1556, his crown of martyrdom tarnished, in the opinion of some, by several previous recantations; brightened, in the opinion of others, by his resolute last stand for the truth. For the literary historian, Cranmer's importance lies not in his theological works, but in his contributions to the Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552. In these he showed himself a master of majestic rhythms and noble phrases which are engraved on the hearts of the people of England.

Next only to the Bible and Prayer Book in its religious influence in Elizabethan days is the book which is always known as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* Its full title is *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perilous Dayes*, and its author, **John Foxe** (1516–1587), drafted it in Latin before he issued the English version in 1563 Its copious illustrations made it appeal to the illiterate as well as to those who could read. The book is the material of history rather than an historical work, and is not a model compilation, but it has been called, not inaptly, "the epic of the martyr age of the Church of England".

The chief defender of the Church of England and its policy of compromise was **Richard Hooker** (1554–1600), who, after being educated at Oxford and taking holy orders, was appointed Master of the Temple at the

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early age of thirty-two. He preached at the Temple on Sunday mornings; the afternoon preacher was one Walter Travers, an eminent Puritan, who had been an unsuccessful candidate for the mastership. A sharp though courteous controversy arose between Hooker and Travers, and inspired the former to write his great work on ecclesiastical polity. Any controversy, however, no matter how politely conducted, was repugnant to Hooker's gentle and sensitive nature, and in 1591 he requested the Archbishop of Canterbury to give him a country benefice "where I may study, and pray for God's blessing in my endeavours, and keep myself in peace and privacy, and behold God's blessings spring out of my mother earth, and eat my own bread without oppositions". He was accordingly presented to the living of Boscombe, Wiltshire, and afterwards to the better living of Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, where he laboured continually at his great book until his death in 1600.

Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie is a masterpiece both in thought and style. In the first two books he expounds philosophical principles and in the later books he applies them to the question in hand, so that in ways the first two books are the most generally interesting. But Hooker had great gifts; what might seem to be merely of temporary interest becomes of permanent interest in his hands. In his broad, tolerant, and sympathetic spirit, in his calmness, his dignity, and his freedom from rancour, Hooker stands almost alone among theological controversialists. No one, no matter what his religious or political views may be, can rise from a perusal of Hooker without a greatly-increased respect for the Church of England, not only of 1600, but of to-day. His book is typical of England and English ways of thought, equally far removed from

Rome and from Geneva. His style is as judicious as his subject-matter, and keeps carefully to the middle way between stiffness and familiarity, between pedantry and colloquialism, between preciosity and vulgarity. A charming *Life of Hooker* was written by Izaak Walton (see p. 54).

By grouping together a few of the most important of theological writers, we have caused **Roger Ascham** (1515–1568) to be mentioned rather later than he would have been if strict chronological order were adhered to rigidly. He was a Yorkshireman who became Public Orator at Cambridge, a post which in those days usually led to some important public appointment. After being tutor to Princess (afterwards Queen) Elizabeth, he was appointed Latin Secretary to Queen Mary, although he was a staunch Protestant. When Elizabeth became queen, he was continued in the offices he already held, and was appointed in addition private tutor to the queen, a post which he held until his death. His two principal works, *Toxophilus* and *The Scholemaster*, are, naturally enough, often mentioned together; but they are separated by an interval of more than twenty years, during which time rapid changes in the writing of English were going on, so that the earlier work is distinctly more archaic in style. *Toxophilus* is a treatise on archery, written in the form of a dialogue. The first part is an argument in favour of archery as a recreation for students and as an instrument of war; the second part contains practical hints for becoming proficient in the art. *Toxophilus* does not rise transcendent above the limitations of a manual, as does Walton's *Compleat Angler*, which is slightly indebted to Ascham; but it is a sound and sensible treatise written in easy and vigorous English *The Scholemaster* is not exactly a general tractate on education, but an essay

mainly on the teaching of Latin; it is not addressed to schoolmasters so much as to private tutors; and the pupils whose welfare is consulted belong to the upper, not the middle classes. Few nowadays read *The Schole-master* for the principles of education which it contains, just as few read *Toxophilus* for the sake of its advice on archery. Ascham is read for his simple and clear English, for his sound literary criticism, and for a certain quaint-ness which gives charm to his personality and his writings.

A book in which the Elizabethans took especial delight was the translation of *Plutarch's Lives* by **Sir Thomas North** (1535–1601). This famous translation —perhaps the best of all the many good translations of that day—excellent as it is in itself, owes much of its fame to the use made of it by Shakespeare. It was Shake-speare's principal guide to the ancient world; it was the direct source of *Julius Cæsar*, *Coriolanus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, and was also used for *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Pericles*. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* was a collection of forty-six biographies arranged in pairs, each pair consisting of a Greek and a Roman whose careers or characters were more or less alike. This book did more to interpret ancient Greece and Rome to modern Europe than many works of greater creative genius. North's translation was a rendering of Amyot's famous French version; it is thus two degrees removed from the original—the shadow of a shade—but it is little the worse for that. Plutarch is one of the few authors who lose little by being read in a translation. His style is somewhat pedestrian; Amyot improved on him in this respect, and North improved on Amyot. North's rendering is, in fact, not so much a translation as a transfiguration of the Greek.

Another favourite book of Shakespeare's, though of much less literary value than Plutarch, was Holinshed's *Chronicle.* **Raphael Holinshed** (*d.* 1580) was, it is believed, a graduate of Cambridge and "a minister of God's word". He is known to have been employed in the printing-office of a German named Reginald Wolfe, who had the Teutonic taste for voluminous compilations, and who projected a universal history, but died after working at it for twenty-five years. Holinshed had assisted him in his labours, and after his death was chosen to edit Wolfe's papers, in a less ambitious but more manageable form. Instead of a universal history, the book was to be a history of the British Isles. He was assisted by a competent body of collaborators. The work appeared in two folio volumes, well illustrated, in 1578; a revised edition, without illustrations, appeared in 1586, after Holinshed's death.

Shakespeare was a boy of fourteen when the book first appeared, and a young man of twenty-two at the time of the publication of the revised edition. He based upon Holinshed nearly all his historical plays, as well as *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and part of *Cymbeline.* In some places Shakespeare has done little more than versify Holinshed. This connexion with Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists is Holinshed's chief title to fame. He is a clear writer, but has no great literary qualities; his credulity is as reprehensible as his industry is commendable.

Another compiler on the grand scale was **Richard Hakluyt** (1552–1616), who, while still a schoolboy at Westminster, began to study geography, navigation and exploration; he carried his enthusiasm with him to Oxford, where he lectured on these subjects; and he wished to found a lectureship on them, not at Oxford, but probably at Ratcliffe or somewhere else where sea-

faring men congregate. In 1589 appeared the first edition of his great work, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, in one volume. The second edition, very much amplified, was in three volumes, and carried the record down to 1600. This enormous compilation contains in all 517 separate narratives. It has been called " the prose epic of the modern English nation ", but it contains many Latin documents, and many patents, letters, instructions, and so on, as well as truly epic narratives. It is a book which well repays the exercise of the gentle art of skipping. The narratives of many of the early explorers, written in many cases by an unknown hand, are unequalled as tales of heroism plainly told. Hakluyt was an ideal editor, a man of tireless energy and assiduity; though an excellent writer, he kept himself in the background, with admirable self-denial. He effaced himself, and let his documents speak for themselves.

One of Hakluyt's contributors was **Sir Walter Raleigh** (1552–1618), of whom an early biographer said, " Authors are perplexed under what topick (category) to place him, whether of statesman, seaman, soldier, chemist, or chronologer; for in all these he did excel. He could make everything he read or heard his own, and his own he could easily improve to the greatest advantage. He seemed to be born to that only which he went about, so dexterous was he in all his undertakings, in court, in camp, by sea, by land, with sword, with pen." Raleigh was a Devonshire man who became a soldier at an early age, and distinguished himself in the Irish rebellion of 1580. In the following year he was sent to England with dispatches, and at once became the Queen's favourite. The act of gallantry to which by tradition he owed his advancement is poetically if not historically true, and casts a valuable light

on the characters of Elizabeth and Raleigh alike. After some years he incurred the Queen's displeasure by marrying one of her maids of honour, and he never regained his position in the Queen's affections. To discover the fabled El Dorado or region of gold he planned an expedition to Guiana, on which he embarked in 1595 and reached the Orinoco, but was obliged to return after having done little more than take formal possession of the country in the name of Elizabeth. James I, on his accession in 1603, had his mind poisoned against Raleigh, whom he deprived of all his offices and sent to the Tower. After a most unfair trial Raleigh was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. He was, however, reprieved and confined in the Tower, where he remained for twelve years, devoting himself to scientific and literary work. In 1616 he obtained his release by offering to open a mine of gold which he believed to exist near the Orinoco. The enterprise was a disastrous failure, and on his return Raleigh was executed on his former sentence, as James wished to curry favour with the Spanish court.

Raleigh's principal literary work in his *History of the World*, an unfinished book which traces the history of the world from the creation to 130 B.C., when Macedonia became a Roman province. Raleigh had several able collaborators, but the scheme of the book was his; it was grandly planned and grandly executed, and at times rises to rare height of eloquence.

A most remarkable book is *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, by **Robert Burton** (1577–1640), who spent most of his uneventful life as a Student of Christ Church, Oxford. This book first appeared in quarto in 1621; four other editions, in folio, appeared in the author's lifetime, each containing some improvements and additions. It evidently achieved considerable popu-

larity, and it did so because it conformed to the taste of the time, not on account of its eccentricities. Indeed its eccentricities have been greatly exaggerated; the book is not an elaborate joke, conceived and written in the spirit of Rabelais, but a great medical treatise, serious in purpose, written by one who held that the victims of melancholy had need of the divine as well as of the physician. Burton's age produced not a few works similarly written, but they are forgotten because the learning they contain is specialized, not universal like that of Burton. He indeed took all knowledge for his province; melancholy is his nominal subject; his actual theme is no less than the whole life of man. His book, like his melancholy, is "compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects". The vast number of quotations which he introduces, always aptly, culling some of them from the most out-of-the-way stores of learning, has always had a great charm for scholars. Dr. Johnson declared that *The Anatomy of Melancholy* was the only book that ever drew him out of bed an hour sooner than he would otherwise have got up. Sterne plagiarized freely from Burton, and many later and lesser writers have used him as a quarry. Lamb was an ardent devotee of the "fantastic old great man". Posterity may well be grateful to Burton's publisher, who prevented him from writing his book in Latin.

Francis Bacon (1561–1626), afterwards Lord Verulam and Viscount St. Albans, like some of his learned contemporaries, mistrusted English as a permanent vehicle for thought, and wrote his greatest philosophical works in Latin. His English writings, however, are sufficient in quantity and quality to entitle him to high rank among English prose writers of his own or any age. He was a son of the Keeper of the Great Seal, and

seemed marked out for high office by his abilities and family connexions; but his rise at first was slow. At the age of forty-six, however, he was appointed Solicitor-General, and in little more than ten years had risen to be Lord Chancellor. His fall was more rapid than his rise; in 1621 he was accused of bribery, corruption, and other malpractices; he was fined, imprisoned, and declared incompetent to hold any office of state. He survived his fall five years, occupying himself with his literary and scientific works, and vainly hoping for political employment.

His celebrated *Essays* first appeared in 1597; there are, however, only ten in this edition. That of 1612 contained thirty-eight, and the final edition of 1625 fifty-eight. The *Essays* immediately became and have always remained very popular; they are packed with thought—"infinite riches in a little room"—and their brilliance is so great that at times it is almost cloying. The treatise on *The Advancement of Learning* appeared in 1605; it is a wise and weighty exposition of some of Bacon's philosophy, couched in the choicest English. His *Life of Henry VII* (1622) was the first-fruits of his compulsory leisure. It is an admirable historical work and gives a vivid portrait of the king, upon which modern historical research has done little to improve. *Sylva Sylvarum* and *The New Atlantis* were posthumously published; the latter is a fragmentary philosophical romance, somewhat in the Utopian manner, of great literary and scientific interest. Bacon's Latin works, although they are of immense importance in the history of thought, cannot rightfully find a place in a book on English literature

Bacon was great as an historian, a writer on politics, and a rhetorician; but it is as the father of the inductive method in science, as the powerful exponent of

the principle that facts must be observed and carefully collected before theorizing, that he occupies the position he holds among the world's great ones. The key-notes of his philosophy were Utility and Progress. He held that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass grow where only one grew before, deserved well of mankind. The philosophy of the schoolmen led no-where; every student of it soon found himself lost in a maze of words. Bacon's philosophy was practical; the ends which it proposed were attainable; it was also progressive, so that every generation of those who have followed Bacon's methods begins where the previous generation left off. To his methods we owe directly or indirectly most of the important inventions of the nine-teenth and twentieth centuries. And, from the purely literary point of view, Bacon is an eminent stylist; per-haps no other English writer can put more meaning into so few words.

Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682) was educated at Winchester and Oxford, but his profound and multi-farious learning was greatly increased by travel and con-tinental study. He took the degree of doctor of medicine at Leyden in 1633 and at Oxford in 1637, in which year he settled at Norwich, with which his name is indis-solubly connected. His life there, spent in the discharge of his medical duties, in making and arranging his scientific collections, and in caring for his large family, seems to have been an ideally full and happy one. Hi first and perhaps most celebrated book, *Religio Medic* was written about 1635, and circulated freely in man script copies among his friends. It was published 1643, and at once made a stir, not only in England b on the Continent; it was almost immediately transla into Latin, and afterwards into Dutch, French, German. In 1646 he published his bulkiest but no

best work, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica.* This encyclopædic and highly-entertaining book must have been the result of many years' reading and research. It is a book which most modern readers will enjoy, if they do not attempt to read it through. In 1658 appeared his masterpiece, *Hydriotaphia*, a short but profoundly moving essay on funeral customs and death. In the same volume appeared another short treatise, more fantastic and of less general interest, but no less magnificent in its style, entitled *The Garden of Cyrus.*

In his best-known work Browne laid himself open to a certain amount of misconception. His views were at once so liberal and so varied that he was classed as a Roman Catholic by some of his critics and as a Quaker by others. In *Hydriotaphia* he found a congenial subject, and treated it with the full magnificence of a style which has never been surpassed for grandeur by any writer of English prose. The cadences of the fifth and last chapter of this book ring in the head as no other uninspired writing does. In all his works, however, he displays his unique personality through his unequalled style. His style exactly fits his thought; that he had a good undress style, too, is made pleasantly clear by his letters.

Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), who for the last few years of his life was Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore, is usually, and justly, considered the flower of Anglican writers. Some of his best books are *The Liberty of Prophesying*, *The Great Exemplar*, *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. He is one of the greatest writers of English prose; he was above all an orator, and the beauties of his prose are rhetorical beauties. His prose is perhaps too florid and sometimes too laden with quotations to suit all modern readers; but those who admire him do so whole-heartedly, praise the music of

his majestic and melodious sentences, and compare him to Spenser for the even flow of his rhythms. He is seen at his best as a stylist in his sermons even more frequently than in his devotional treatises, but in all his works alike he unconsciously displays his noble and truly religious character.

John Milton (1608–1674) wrote a considerable amount of noble prose, besides employing his gifts in the composition of some controversial writings which are not altogether to his credit. The best-known and perhaps the best of his prose works is *Areopagitica*, a powerful and eloquent plea for the freedom of the press. *Of Education*, a valuable and not acrimonious pamphlet which appeared in the same year (1644), is an excellent essay. Much of the rest of his prose would remain unread were it not Milton's work. His style is much marred by the length and complexity of his sentences, but it can rise at times to great heights of eloquence.

One of the most delightful of seventeenth-century authors, **Izaak Walton** (1593–1683), can be regarded in some respects as a belated Elizabethan. Walton was an ironmonger, but retired from business in the prime of life and lived to the great age of ninety, spending his time in fishing and in pleasant intercourse with his friends. In 1640 he wrote a life of Donne, which was prefixed to an edition of his sermons; this was added to and issued separately in 1655. He also wrote lives of Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, and Robert Sanderson—Walton had known all these men except Hooker; he had been a close friend of Donne and Wotton; his acquaintance with Sanderson had been slighter; Herbert he had only met. His biographies are all good—indeed are all masterly—but he has done most justice to the men he knew most inti-

mately. Walton's masterpiece, however, is *The Compleat Angler*, which first appeared as a small octavo, price eighteenpence, in 1653. A second edition, much amplified and introducing a hunter and a falconer (instead of a passer-by) to converse with Piscator (the angler), appeared two years later. Walton was not a prolific writer, but everything he wrote was as good as he could make it. He was not artless, as has sometimes been said, but a careful artist who polished his periods sedulously. He has managed to convey to us indirectly in his writings something of the charm of his own personality. His biographies show him in a serious workaday frame of mind; in *The Compleat Angler* we see him in holiday mood. His style is always natural and charming; the spirit which lives in the opening lines of Chaucer's *Prologue* animates all his masterpiece. His niche among English classics is as secure as anyone's; he has written the best fishing idyll in the language, and was, moreover, a pioneer and master in the art of writing brief and attractive biographies.

CHAPTER III

DRAMA TO 1660

English drama, like that of ancient Greece, was connected with certain religious ceremonies in its origin. When the services were in Latin, the words were unintelligible to the great majority of the congregation, so that the actions of the priests and their acolytes became of paramount importance. The Church had already pressed the arts of music and painting into her service, and it was an easy transition from sacred oratorio to

sacred opera, and from religious pictures to religious *tableaux vivants*. The priests impressed certain events in sacred history upon the minds of their congregations by means of dramatic performances which at first took place actually in the church. Thus the removal of the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre and the discovery of the empty tomb was performed at Easter, and the finding of the Babe in the manger by the three Magi was represented at Epiphany. The earliest miracle plays were nearly all Christmas or Easter plays.

The institution of the festival of Corpus Christi was of importance in the history of the sacred drama. This festival was founded in 1264, but did not become popular until half a century later. It was a general, not a particular festival, and was held in summer, so that plays dealing with any subject could be performed, and open-air performances came into vogue. It was not long before the clergy lost control over the plays, and the trade-guilds became responsible for the production of them. One guild vied with another in the mounting of the plays; the expense was considerable, but compulsory. The actors were paid, and were not allowed to be slack or inefficient. Often the guilds were assigned plays appropriate to their profession; thus the Flood was played by the shipwrights, the Miracle of Cana by the vintners, and the Magi by the goldsmiths. This arrangement was a sensible, not a whimsical one, as it ensured that the necessary "properties" were efficiently made. The shipwrights, of course, could build a much more satisfactory ark than, say, the butchers could have done.

There are four principal collections of miracle plays; the numbers in these cycles are given differently by many authorities, but this is not due to inaccuracy. Plays were sometimes amalgamated and sometimes cut

in two, so it is not always easy to decide where one play ends and another begins. Each play is quite short, but the cycles began with the Creation and ended with the Day of Judgement. The plays were performed on wagons, which were moved round to various "stations" in the town, one play being performed at each station. The four cycles which we possess are: (1) the York plays, 48 in number; (2) the Towneley plays, 30 in number, so called from the family which long owned the manuscript, but also known as the *Wakefield* or *Woodkirk* plays; (3) the Chester plays, 24 in number; (4) the Coventry plays, 42 in number. The Coventry plays are different in some respects from the other cycles; their connexion with Coventry is based on a vague tradition, and they were probably written for strolling players, not guilds. We also have a number of single plays, and an interesting set of three plays written in Cornish.

When the cycle of plays was so long, and lasted for several days from sunrise to sunset, it became necessary to introduce a comic element in order to retain the attention of the audience. It was not long before this comic element became of great importance. The Towneley or Wakefield play known as *Secunda Pagina Pastorum* (Second Shepherds' Play) is famous for its comic scenes. It is a nativity play, but the shepherds who are watching their flocks by night are Yorkshire shepherds. A sheep-stealer named Mac steals one of their sheep, and conveys it to his home, puts it in his cradle, and pretends it is a new-born baby. His trick is at last discovered and he is tossed in a blanket. This purely farcical scene and others of the kind prepared the way for the mixture of the comic and the serious which is so notable a feature in Elizabethan plays. Another comic character was Noah's wife, who showed herself most obstinate in her refusal to go on board the

ark. Cain is unintentionally a humorous character. The clerical authors of the plays represented him as a typical niggardly farmer who attempted to avoid paying his tithes; his default in this respect was treated as a much more serious offence than his murder of Abel. Herod and Pontius Pilate were, of course, represented as loud-mouthed tyrants who worked themselves into an ecstasy of rage. The crudity of some of these plays gives rise to unconscious humour; but there is even more of this in the account-books, some of which have been preserved. There are such items as "Paid for mending hell's mouth, 2*d*", "Paid for setting the world on fire, 5*d*", "Paid for a pair of gloves for God, 2*d*", "To Fawston for hanging Judas, 4*d*", "To Fawston for cock-crowing, 10*d*", and "Paid for a pound of hemp to mend the angels' heads, 4*d*".

The *morality play* is a later growth than the miracle play, and its characters are all or almost all personified abstractions. It is allegory dramatized. Moralities are in some ways more sophisticated and less interesting productions than miracle plays; but they did not have traditional plots. The author had to invent his story, such as it was, and so the morality marks an important stage in the development of the drama. Many moralities, too, have a contest in them, and a contest is said to be the first essential of true drama. The contest is the oldest of contests—the conflict between the powers of good and the powers of evil for the soul of man. Thus, although morality plays are sometimes long and tedious and too allegorical and abstract, they have original plots and a clash of characters, if abstractions can rank as characters. The comic element is kept more in the background in the morality than in the miracle play; it is chiefly confined to the Devil and his servant the Vice. The best morality play is without doubt *Everyman*,

which, if well presented, can still move profoundly a modern audience; but it is not a typical specimen of its kind. It is uncertain whether the Dutch or the English version of this play is the earlier.

The *interlude* is later than the morality; it is not a very definite species, but tends to be secular in its subject-matter, and to be a mere entertainment. It is also much briefer than the morality; by the time it came into fashion the discovery had been made that brevity is the soul of wit. It was played before nobles and men of wealth, and had not the democratic character of the older plays.

One of the earliest playwrights who is more than a mere name is **John Heywood** (1497–1580 ?), who held some kind of official position with regard to the amusements of the court. He was a special favourite of Queen Mary, who is said to have summoned him to her deathbed to alleviate her sufferings with his lively conversation. The plays attributed to Heywood are six in number, and, curiously enough, the two most interesting are only thought to be his work, while his authorship of the other four is certain. It is, however, customary to assume that he wrote all six plays. *The Play of Love* is a play based entirely upon argument; four characters, "Loving not Loved", "Loved not Loving", "Both Loved and Loving" and "Neither Loving nor Loved", contend together about their respective happinesses and miseries. *The Dialogue of Wit and Folly* is also purely argumentative, the question which it discusses being whether the wise man or the fool has the pleasanter life. *The Play of the Four PP.* is extremely lively and amusing, but considered as drama is little better than its two predecessors (if predecessors they were). A Palmer, Pardoner, Pothecary and Pedlar boast about the merits of their respective callings, and end by having a lie-

telling competition, which the Palmer wins comfortably by declaring that he never once saw a woman out of patience. *The Play of the Wether* is clever and amusing; Jupiter hears (by deputy) petitions from all sorts and conditions of men as to the kind of weather they desire. The petitioners are a gentleman, a merchant, a ranger, a water-miller, a wind-miller, a gentlewoman, a washerwoman, and a boy, " the least that can play ". Naturally they all want different kinds of weather, and in the end Jupiter decides, as though acting on the report of a Royal Commission, that " Ye shall have the wether even as yt was ". The two doubtful plays are much more dramatic, and, unlike the others, end with the discomfiture of virtue. *The Pardoner and the Frere, the Curate and Neybour Pratte* is based on Chaucer and is not mere argument, but has action and stage " business ", however elementary. *Johan Johan* is a little masterpiece of a farce, with quite sufficient action, and some character-drawing of no mean ability. Not a little of its charm is due to its conciseness. Heywood was not a masterly dramatist, but he turned the abstractions of the morality play into concrete human beings, and wrote comedies which were intended primarily to amuse, not merely to instruct.

The earliest English comedy, properly so called, is *Ralph Roister Doister*, by **Nicholas Udall** (1505–1556), who was headmaster of Eton for seven and of Westminster for three years, though ill-qualified by temperament and character for high scholastic appointments of this kind. His comedy is a landmark in literary history, but its intrinsic merits are slight. It is, however, a regular comedy; it has some plot, and is divided into acts and scenes. It is filled with reminiscences of the two Latin comedy-writers, Plautus and Terence, and yet is not a mere translation or paraphrase;

nor is it an artless native production, as it would probably have been if its author had not been steeped in Roman comedy. But in spite of all these advantages it is not an amusing play to read. Dame Christian Custance and her absurd wooer are not great comic creations, and the doggerel verse in which the play is written soon wearies the reader.

William Stevenson (*d.* 1575) is now believed, on fairly good grounds, to have been the author of the coarse but lively comedy *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. This play was for many years attributed to John Still, who was in turn Master of the two leading Cambridge colleges, and Bishop of Bath and Wells—a most unlikely author for a rather graceless comedy. Stevenson was, indeed, a prebendary of Durham, but was not so renowned for the gravity of his character as was Still *Gammer Gurton's Needle* is of some historical importance as being the earliest recorded university play to be written in English. Its plot turns upon the loss of a needle, the schemes of the half-witted Diccon, and the ultimate recovery of the needle in the place where it had been left, but where no one had thought of looking—the seat of Hodge's leather breeches. Though the plot is trivial the characters are well drawn, and are obviously studies from the life. The metre is rough and rude; the characters speak in that south-western dialect which even at that early date was the conventional dialect for rustics on the stage The play, though marred by some attempts at humour of the Fourth Form type, is admirably lively, and contains one of the best drinking-songs in the language ("Back and side go bare, go bare").

The five plays written by **John Bale** (1495–1563), a most bitter Protestant, who was for a short time Bishop of Ossory in Ireland, have little literary interest Four

of them, indeed, biblical in subject and controversial in treatment, have little interest of any kind; but the fifth, *Kynge Johan*, though not much better as a work of art, is of decided importance as a link between the old morality plays and the historical drama. It is an odd and crude play; King John himself is treated as a champion of Protestantism; its characters are a curious mixture of persons and personifications. Its chief interest lies in its being an ancestor, however remote, of the two parts of *Henry IV* and other masterly historical plays.

From the earliest comedy and the earliest history play it is an easy transition to the earliest tragedy, *Gorboduc*, also called *Ferrex and Porrex*. This play was the joint work of **Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset** (1536–1608), and of **Thomas Norton** (1532–1584). Sackville, who was known for many years as Lord Buckhurst, was an eminent statesman, who crowned a long and distinguished career by becoming Lord Treasurer in 1599 and Lord High Steward in 1601. Norton was also a public figure, though on a smaller scale, being appointed remembrancer of the City of London in 1571, and licencer of the press ten years later. *Gorboduc* was first performed by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple on Twelfth Night, 1561; it was repeated twelve days later by royal command in the queen's presence; an unauthorized version was printed in 1565, and an authorized version in 1570. The old editions assign the first three acts to Norton and the last two to Sackville quite definitely; modern scepticism has tried unsuccessfully to minimize Norton's share. *Gorboduc* is, like most early tragedies, based on Seneca, the Latin author of some pompous tragedies which were intended to be read, not acted; it is stately, but lacking in action; all the sensational incidents take place off the stage and are

merely reported. Its blank verse is wooden and monotonous, and its characters are arranged symmetrically, most of them being grouped in pairs ("opposite numbers" is the popular phrase of to-day), like rival sets of chessmen on a board. Dumb-show precedes each act, and there is a rhymed chorus. The plot is as follows: "Gorboduc, King of Britain, divided his realm in his lifetime to his sons, Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fell to dissension. The younger killed the elder. The mother, that more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the younger. The people, moved with the cruelty of the fact, rose in rebellion, and slew both father and mother. The nobility assembled, and most terribly destroyed the rebels; and afterwards, for want of issue to the Prince, whereby the succession of the crown became uncertain, they fell to civil war, in which both they and many of their issues were slain, and land for a long time almost desolate and miserably wasted." The propaganda behind this plot is obvious; the play is a representation of the miseries of a disputed succession, and is thus indirectly an admonition to Queen Elizabeth to marry. It is not a masterpiece, but is of great interest as our earliest tragedy, and is a definite landmark in our literature.

One of the most notable of Shakespeare's forerunners as a writer of tragedies was Thomas Kyd (1557–1595 ?) whose principal work, or at any rate whose principal extant work, is *The Spanish Tragedy*, probably written about 1586. It is a play on the Senecan model, full of horrors. In spite of, or perhaps because of, its orgy of bloodshed, it was immensely popular and had a long life, giving pleasure not only to contemporary audiences, but to younger and more sophisticated generations of playgoers. Several of its phrases became proverbial. Its success caused the production of a

companion-play usually called *The First Part of Jeronimo*. A sequel to *The Spanish Tragedy* was obviously impossible, as so many of its characters were dead; so *Jeronimo*, though written later, is a forerunner to the other play. *Jeronimo* is a crude, ill-written play, so absurd that some critics interpret it as intentionally so. It is almost impossible to believe that Kyd wrote this burlesque upon his own work; and there are reasons for supposing that this play was not written until after 1600, when Kyd had been dead five years or more. There is a considerable body of evidence, too long to summarize here, that in 1588 or thereabouts Kyd wrote a *Hamlet*, some passages of which possibly survive in the 1603 quarto edition of Shakespeare's play. There is no Elizabethan document whose loss is more to be regretted than the loss of this old play; for no other document would throw more light on Shakespeare's mind and art. There is no doubt that Shakespeare had an older play in front of him when he wrote *Hamlet*, and small doubt that the play was Kyd's.

Kyd is one of the most important and one of the least interesting of Shakespeare's predecessors. His work has the historic but not the intrinsic value of Marlowe's. His sombre and Senecan masterpiece set the fashion in the early 'nineties for tragedies of the type of *Titus Andronicus*, and at a later date for plays like those of Webster and Tourneur. Though its plot is fairly well constructed and its dialogue more human than that of Marlowe, it is not great literature. "Sporting Kyd", as Jonson punningly called him, the point of the jest lying in the inappropriateness of the epithet, did, however, contribute certain valuable elements to early drama, such as a better plot and good stage situations. Marlowe influenced Shakespeare the poet, and Kyd influenced Shakespeare the dramatist.

Christopher Marlowe (1561–1593), the son of a shoemaker, was born in Canterbury less than three months before the birth of Shakespeare. He was educated at King's School, Canterbury, and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he acquired heterodox views on religion. After going down from Cambridge, he became a secret-service agent of some kind, and travelled abroad in this capacity. He settled in London in 1586, and soon joined the Lord Admiral's Company of Players. His career as a dramatist must have begun soon after his career as an actor. On the 30th May, 1593, he was stabbed in an inn at Deptford by a shady secret-service agent of the name of Frizer, and died at the age of twenty-nine years and three months.

Marlowe's earliest extant play is *Tamburlaine the Great*, which was probably produced in 1587. It is in two parts, but is virtually one play in ten acts. With all its faults of violence and bombast, *Tamburlaine* was incomparably the best tragedy that had as yet been produced on the English stage. It is important not only for its intrinsic merits, which are considerable, but also as a piece of pioneer work. It is the first play to be written in real blank verse, as distinguished from the mere unrhymed ten-syllable lines of *Gorboduc*. Marlowe's verse, while dignified and majestic, is much more supple and infinitely less monotonous than that of any of his predecessors. *Tamburlaine* is obviously a young man's work, but its exaggeration contributed to its success, and its influence on English tragedy was very great.

The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus was produced in 1588. It is not a well-constructed play, being a series of disconnected scenes rather than a connected whole. Its text is not in a satisfactory condition, and the comic scenes, which contain extremely poor fooling, are, it is believed or hoped, by another hand. Yet *Doctor Faustus*

is a memorable play; the address to Helen and the concluding scenes of the play and soliloquies of Faustus are among the best things not only in Marlowe, but in all English drama. Goethe said of this play, "How greatly it is all planned!" and thought of translating it. In the great work of his life he extended and embroidered the Faust legend almost beyond recognition; but it may be doubted if he wrote anything that arouses so much pity and terror as the conclusion of Marlowe's play.

The Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta was produced about 1590. Its plot, unlike those of the other plays, appears to have been invented by Marlowe. It is a play of very unequal merits; the first two acts are written in Marlowe's best style, and the last three are feeble and melodramatic. Barrabas is scarcely a more life-like figure than Mr. Punch, whom he resembles in his taste for atrocities. He finally perishes by means of "something lingering with boiling oil in it" which he had prepared for someone else. In spite of some absurdities, this play has many passages of noble poetry in it, notably the opening soliloquy of the Jew.

Edward II (about 1591) is the most flawless of Marlowe's plays, though not the most magnificent. It is his greatest work as a dramatist, but not as a poet. Marlowe's genius was in some respects epic rather than dramatic. An historical play gave the poetical side of his genius less scope; to admire *Edward II* more than the other plays is to admire what is less typical of Marlowe. The death-scene in this play is one of the most moving scenes in all drama, ancient or modern.

Marlowe's other two plays are of comparatively small importance. Both have been preserved in a mutilated and mangled state. *The Massacre at Paris* is notable for little except its strong anti-Catholic tendencies. In *Dido, Queen of Carthage* Marlowe failed mainly because

he adhered too closely to Virgil, regardless of the different medium in which he was working. This again shows the epic nature of Marlowe's genius.

Marlowe, although he died so young, was great not merely in promise but in performance. He created blank verse, founded English tragedy, and wrote some of the finest passages of dramatic poetry in the language. He is incomparably the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors, being as much above Kyd, Greene and Peele as Shakespeare is above Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher. To no pioneer, except Chaucer, does English literature owe more; and yet it is not merely as a pioneer that he deserves to be remembered. He deserves to be loved and reverenced as one of our greatest poets. Nor must it be thought that he taught Shakespeare merely how to write blank verse; he taught Shakespeare and England in his mighty lines how to write about high matters in the grand style. Sublimity is his greatest gift to English literature.

If English tragedy owes a debt to Marlowe, English comedy owes almost as heavy a debt, though less frequently acknowledged, to Lyly. **John Lyly** (1554–1606) has acquired a not too enviable reputation as the originator of the style called "euphuism"; but his eight comedies are much more worthy of remembrance than his two novels. He was a "man of Kent" and a graduate of Oxford, who cherished the ambition—destined to be unfulfilled—of becoming Master of the Revels. His comedies were written between 1579 and 1590. They were all written for performance at court by the Chapel Children and the Paul's Boys; hence they stood rather apart from the bulk of Elizabethan plays. They are written in a delicate and trifling vein, their charm lies in their dialogue rather than in their plot, and they are designed to appeal to a highly-cul-

tured audience. The groundlings at the Globe would have found them unintelligible and insipid. They are all, except *The Woman in the Moon*, written in prose, not in blank verse nor in doggerel. With one exception, *Mother Bombie*, which follows Plautus as a model, they are all mythological and fanciful comedies. The best of them are perhaps *Endimion* and *Alexander and Campaspe.* Lyly's prose is the work of a literary artist; he freely introduced into his plays lyrics of the most charming kind, delightful in themselves and in keeping with the situation. His plots are negligible; he saw men not clearly but as trees walking; but his great gifts to drama were refinement, literary style, and the fashion of introducing lyrics. It is not merely the fact that he adopted prose as a vehicle for his comedies that makes him important. He is important because his style, though often conceited and fantastic, is a style; not a mere haphazard jumble of words, as the compositions of some of his predecessors tended to be.

A less important predecessor of Shakespeare's is **Robert Greene** (1560–1592), a graduate of both universities, who in his private life did little credit to either. After travelling in Spain and Italy, he settled in London and, about 1583, commenced his precarious career as playwright and pamphleteer, a career which was sadly interrupted by his sordid profligacy. He died at the age of thirty-two. His chief plays are *Alphonsus King of Arragon*, an echo of *Tamerlaine*; *Orlando Furioso*; *The Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, probably written to rival *Doctor Faustus*; and *The Scottish History of James IV, slain at Flodden.* This last play belies its name, as it is not a chronicle-play, but a dramatization of a story found in the collection of Italian tales from which Shakespeare drew the plot of *Othello.* Greene was not an accomplished

dramatist, but he drew characters with some cleverness, and developed his plots with no little success. He followed the fashion of his times; he imitated Lyly and Marlowe, and yet he added his own contributions—grace and delicacy—to early drama.

A friend and fellow-profligate of Greene's was George Peele (1558–1597), who was, however, a more likeable rascal than his brother-dramatist. Peele was educated at Christ's Hospital and Oxford, and led a Bohemian and hand-to-mouth existence in London, dying before he reached the age of forty. His pastoral comedy *The Araygnement of Paris* appeared about 1581. It is a graceful play, full of skilful flattery of Queen Elizabeth. *King Edward I* (to reduce its lengthy title to a reasonable compass) is a chronicle-history which misrepresents Queen Elinor because she was a Spaniard. It probably appeared soon after the defeat of the Armada. *The Old Wives' Tale* is one of the most amusing of Peele's plays. It is usually considered to be a skit upon romantic drama; but some critics consider that it exemplifies rather than satirizes a certain kind of folly. Milton derived more than a hint or two from this play when writing *Comus*. *The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe* (1588) owes its plot entirely to the Old Testament, and was probably written to conciliate puritan opposition to the drama, though it may well be doubted whether it succeeded in its well-meant endeavour. Peele had not the natural gifts that a dramatist should have; his very considerable gifts were purely poetical. He wrote plays simply to make a livelihood; he had no literary conscience, and something of the university man's contempt for his audience, and for himself for writing stuff of this kind. *The Old Wives' Tale* probably gives his views upon contemporary drama; in his last years he wrote pageants because they paid better. He could not handle a plot,

or a dramatic situation. His work, however, is full of variety and interest, and he has a real talent for writing musical language.

About the life of **William Shakespeare** (1564–1616) we know much less than we should like, but decidedly more than we know about many of his contemporaries. Most of the information we possess about him has been gleaned from old documents by the patient toil of scholars, and deals, as such information is wont to do, with money affairs and legal transactions. These records tell us much more about the man of business than they do about the poet and dramatist.

Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon late in April, 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, was a glover, a dealer in corn and timber, and probably also a butcher. His mother, Mary Arden, was an heiress in a small way. During Shakespeare's childhood John Shakespeare's affairs prospered; he was high-bailiff of Stratford in 1568. Afterwards he was much less prosperous. It can hardly be doubted that Shakespeare was educated at the free grammar-school at Stratford, where he learnt to read Latin with ease and pleasure and to take a special delight in the poems of Ovid. It is uncertain how Shakespeare occupied himself after he left school. One tradition, rather better supported than most, asserts that he was a schoolmaster in the country. At some unknown date, probably in the autumn of 1585, Shakespeare, who was now a married man with three children, left Stratford-on-Avon for London.

It is not known how Shakespeare's connexion with the stage began, but we do know that he was a member of one company of actors throughout all his career. This company, known successively as "the Earl of Derby's men", "the Lord Chamberlain's men", and, finally, after the accession of James, "the King's servants",

came to be recognized as the leading theatrical company of the day. It is probable that Shakespeare never played important parts as an actor; he soon began to show that he could write and produce plays better than he could act. The substantial fortune which he eventually made was, however, derived from the share which he acquired in the ownership of the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres, not from his author's fees; though, of course, his plays did much to increase the prosperity and popularity of the theatres of which he was part-owner.

By 1597 there are manifest signs of Shakespeare's growing wealth. In that year he bought New Place, the "big house" in Stratford. In the previous year he had applied for a grant of arms; already he may have cherished the idea of ultimately leaving London and settling down at home as a country gentleman.

In 1599 the Globe Theatre was built on Bankside, and Shakespeare was made a partner in Burbage's company. Purchases of land and tithes at Stratford attest his ever-growing prosperity and his provident care for the future.

In or about 1611 Shakespeare felt that he could realize his dreams, and retired from London to Stratford. He revisited London at times, however, and bought property there in 1613.

In the early spring of 1616 Shakespeare's health began to fail; he executed his will on 25th March and died at New Place on 23rd April.

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with a first-rate part for Burbage. Shakespeare had read the Latin comic dramatist Plautus at school and, possibly, with his pupils if he was a "schoolmaster in the country"; in *The Comedy of Errors* he imitated Plautus and produced an excellent if somewhat mechanical farce, with a serious background of his own. In *Titus Andronicus* he turned for a model to the Latin writer Seneca, whose ten tragedies, though almost entirely worthless, were considered to be patterns of what a tragedy should be. The result is a crude and brutal play, which many critics deny to be Shakespeare's. *The Taming of the Shrew* is a rather rough and boisterous comedy based upon an extremely clever but rather short play of unknown authorship. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Shakespeare first attempted a comedy of the romantic type which he was to make his own. It has many of the ingredients of the later comedies, but little skill is shown in compounding them. It is not a great performance, but is rich in promise of better things. *Love's Labour's Lost* has all the signs of having been written for a private performance before a select audience. It is full of topical allusions which we cannot understand. Its plot, which is slight but sufficient to keep the play moving on the stage, was, for once in a way, Shakespeare's own invention.

Shakespeare now began to aim higher, and wrote three poetical plays, one of each kind (tragedy, history and comedy), each of which marks a great advance on its predecessors. *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, and *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* are not only great plays but great poems. In the *Dream* there is a happy combination of humour, fancy, and poetry which can only be paralleled in other works of Shakespeare, and which is entirely his own. In *King John* Shakespeare reverted to history and dressed up an old play to look like new; it is a

clever bit of adaptation but not a great play. When writing *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare took two or three stories which were in themselves neither credible nor interesting, and wove them into a brilliant play which is still superb on the stage. The least of critics can point out flaws and faults in this play, but only the greatest of dramatists could have written it. *King Henry IV*, *Parts I and II*, really one play in ten acts, is a masterly combination of history and comedy; the two ingredients do not merely blend harmoniously, each actually enhances the value of the other. *Much Ado about Nothing* is a charming comedy with more than a trace of melodrama in it, as the main plot in time has become a subsidiary interest, as the underplot has swamped it. It was followed by *Henry V*, the last of the historical plays (*Henry VIII* is more pageant than play). It is an epic rather than a drama, and contains some splendid pieces of patriotic writing.

In *Julius Cæsar* Shakespeare broke new ground and wrote a tragedy based on his favourite book, Plutarch's *Lives*. It forms a kind of transition between the histories and the tragedies; it is a much less painful play than most of the tragedies which followed it. Two charming comedies followed, the pastoral play *As You Like It*, and the even more charming *Twelfth Night*, in which Shakespeare repeats several of his favourite comic devices but treats them with a firmer and more mature hand.

In *Hamlet* Shakespeare transformed a crude melodrama into a tragic masterpiece which has proved to be his most popular play. It is, in its final form, too long a play to be acted without severe cutting; and there is every indication that Shakespeare wrote much of it to satisfy himself, not to please the Globe audience, though he succeeded to perfection in doing that as well.

The delightful prose comedy of *The Merry Wives of*

Windsor is a sort of postscript to the *Henry IV* series of plays, as it was written in a fortnight in obedience to a command of Queen Elizabeth's. It was followed by three rather bitter comedies: *Troilus and Cressida*, an odd play which was probably not produced at the Globe; *All's Well that ends Well*, which may have been written by Shakespeare in his early days and revised later; and *Measure for Measure*, the best of the three, but an unpleasant mirthless comedy.

Shakespeare's next play was probably *Othello*, the most painful as well as the most perfectly constructed of his tragedies. It was followed by *King Lear*, the most sublime of all the plays; *Lear* was followed by *Macbeth*, which is perhaps the most thrilling and horror-inspiring of the great tragedies.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* Shakespeare returned to Plutarch and the Roman world. In the former play he unfolded a vast historical panorama with incomparable skill; in *Coriolanus* he wrote a tragedy which is much less tragic than its predecessors, as, though the hero dies, he redeems himself before death.

There is something wrong with *Timon of Athens*, though we cannot say whether the play as we have it is a first draft, or whether it contains the work of another dramatist. Parts of it are as magnificent as some of the speeches in *Lear*, but it is not a well-constructed whole.

The four plays with which Shakespeare ended his career as dramatist stand apart from the earlier comedies and are usually called " Romances ". There is a strong element of the fairy-tale about them. In *Pericles* Shakespeare added three acts written in his best vein to two acts of unadulterated trash written by some unknown hack. *Cymbeline* is notable for the beautiful figure of Imogen; *The Winter's Tale* for its pastoral poetry and the remarkable scene where the statue comes to life.

But the greatest of the four romances is *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's farewell to the stage. Into it he introduced the fairy element which had given such charm to *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*; but he handled it with even greater skill and mastery. *Othello*, *Lear*, and *Hamlet* are perhaps greater plays than *The Tempest*, but no play shows more clearly than his last the essential spirit of Shakespeare.

Shakespeare collaborated with Fletcher to write *Henry VIII*, a play which depends for its success more upon pageantry and declamation than upon plot and poetry. They probably collaborated also in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a dramatization of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. Many other plays have from time to time been attributed to Shakespeare for reasons good, bad and indifferent. None of these plays is Shakespeare's work in its entirety. The play of *Sir Thomas More* is of interest because its original manuscript is preserved in the British Museum, and is believed to contain a fairly long addition (147 lines) in Shakespeare's handwriting.

In his *Preface to Shakespeare* Dr. Johnson says, in his oracular manner, "A dramatic exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish its effect." This is a thoroughly unsatisfactory definition. It is easy to fall into the error of regarding Shakespeare as a writer of books, and to forget that he wrote for the theatre. Not only were his plays written to be acted, but they were written to be acted by a special company of actors, whom Shakespeare knew intimately, and to be produced upon a stage which differed in many important respects from the stage of to-day. To understand and appreciate the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries [illegible]

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[illegible]

was built in 1576, when Shakespeare was a boy of twelve. It was called The Theatre. Another was built later in the same year, and named The Curtain, not because of its own curtain (for, as we shall see, the curtain was a very minor feature of the Elizabethan stage) but because it was built on a piece of ground known as the Curtain, a technical term used by military engineers for the plain wall of a fortified place. This was followed by The Rose in 1587, The Swan in 1595, Shakespeare's own theatre The Globe in 1599 (made of the materials of The Theatre, which was pulled down in a manner disturbing to the public peace), The Fortune in 1599, The Red Bull about 1605, and The Hope in 1613. These eight theatres, crude as they were, were objects of pride to many Londoners, and of admiration to most foreigners, for there was nothing like them to be seen on the Continent.

Plays used to be acted in inn-yards, and the early theatres were like inn-yards without the inn. Outside they were round or six-sided in shape; the interior was round. The audience either stood on the ground, with no protection from sun or rain, or paid a higher price and sat in one of the three galleries, which were protected by a thatched roof. Some of the audience, especially young men of fashion, hired stools and sat on the stage itself. The stage projected far into the audience, so that the actors were seen from three sides, indeed from four sides, for sometimes the audience occupied the gallery at the back of the stage. The modern stage has the effect of a *picture*, which is framed by the proscenium arch, and which can be concealed by the lowering of the curtain. The Elizabethan stage had the effect of displaying groups of living *statues*, and the main stage could not be concealed by a curtain. The effect of the audience almost surrounding the actors was to

make it much easier for the actors to keep in touch with the audience. Asides and soliloquies, which seem not a little absurd on the modern stage, seemed quite appropriate on the projecting stage, where no footlights separated actors and audience.

The effect of the absence of curtain was to make it essential for the dramatist to manœuvre his characters on and off the stage with great skill. At the end of a tragedy, for instance, some provision had to be made for the removal of the dead bodies from the stage. The dead men could not get up, in full sight of the audience, and walk off. Therefore the tragedies usually end with a few quiet lines, often spoken by minor characters, instead of ending with a climax, as many modern plays do.

Plays were usually performed from about three o'clock to about five o'clock in the afternoon—earlier when the days were shorter. There was no means of darkening the theatre, so that the performance always took place in broad daylight. The dramatist had, therefore, to rely entirely on his words to produce the illusion of night and darkness on the stage. With what magic Shakespeare has performed this task may be seen time and again in many of his plays; it is especially noticeable in *Macbeth* and *Julius Cæsar*.

At the back of the stage was the tiring-room, where the actors dressed, and where they awaited their cue to appear. The gallery at the back of the stage was often used to represent the upper story of any building—it was Juliet's balcony, the walls of a beleaguered town, and so on. Under this balcony there was a corridor, known now as the inner or rear stage, which could be concealed by means of a small curtain. This inner stage served many purposes it was Prospero's cell in *The Tempest*, the Capulets' tomb in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Desdemona's bed-chamber in *Othello*. Behind its

curtain was concealed the supposed statue of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. On it was performed the play, *The Murder of Gonzago*, with which Hamlet tested his uncle's guilt. There was also a place below the stage, whence the Ghost in *Hamlet* spoke, and where the orchestra played mysterious music in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the floor of the stage was a trap-door by which ghosts and others ascended and descended. This probably also represented such things as Ophelia's grave in the last act of *Hamlet*.

Perhaps the most surprising feature to us of the Elizabethan stage is the fact that there were no actresses. All the women's parts were taken by boys. These boys were highly trained and well disciplined; and though to us it seems strange that parts such as those of Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth and Desdemona should have been written for boy-actors, there is no reason to believe that these parts suffered through the embargo on women-players.

Broadly speaking, there was no scenery on Shakespeare's stage, or next to none. There were properties, however—such things as a bed, a well, an altar, and so on. When these properties were not wanted, they were sometimes but by no means always removed; often their presence was ignored by actors and audience alike. Many scenes have been assigned a definite locality by later editors; as a matter of fact they were regarded by Shakespeare and his audience as just taking place "somewhere". The absence of scenery and of intervals between so-called scenes enabled the plays to be acted with great rapidity, and that is how they should be acted if they are to be seen to the greatest advantage. There were, however, short intervals between the acts, during which music was often played.

The actors dressed with great pomp and elaboration;

dress was by far the most expensive item in the cost of producing a play. The costumes were made of really good and costly materials, not mere shoddy stuff which looked well at a distance. A cloak cost as much as £20, which represents many times that sum to-day. But no attempt was made to dress the characters in costumes such as were actually worn in the days when the events portrayed were supposed to have taken place or in the country where the scene was set. The actors simply wore extravagantly rich costumes of their own day and country.

Allowing for the difference in the purchasing-power of money, the prices in the Elizabethan theatre were much the same as the prices of seats to-day. In the public theatres, the prices ranged from 1*d.* to 1*s.*; a penny for standing-room in the "pit", a shilling for a seat in the best part of one of the balconies. In the so-called "private" theatres, the prices ranged from 6*d.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* These private theatres differed in some respects from the public theatres: they were roofed over, so that performances could take place by artificial light, and in winter-time; they did not hold so many people; and their higher prices made their audiences rather more select. Shakespeare's company took over the management of a theatre of this kind at Blackfriars in 1608.

Towards the end of Shakespeare's career the public stage was influenced by the development of the masque, an elaborate and expensive form of entertainment in which King James delighted. The central feature of the masque was a dance by a number of noble lords and ladies, but this dance was often preceded by a kind of playlet in which professional actors took part, and by most elaborate stage effects, some of which resembled the transformation-scene in a modern pantomime The difference between the simple stage effects of, say, *The*

Merchant of Venice and the more elaborate effects of *The Tempest* is due in part to the influence of the masque; in part, no doubt, it is due to developments in play-production that would naturally take place in fifteen years, between 1596 and 1611.

During most of Shakespeare's active career as a dramatist the stage was rather crude, but its crudity was not entirely a drawback. It stimulated the audience to use its imagination; and the use of imagination at one point quickens it at other points, and so is positively an all-round gain. Conversely, realism on the stage often blunts the imagination, and so defeats its own object. It arouses in the audience a critical sense which it cannot satisfy. Shakespeare's stage depended for its illusion upon the poetry of the dramatist, not upon the tricks of the scene-painter or the stage-carpenter. The plays gained much from being performed rapidly, with no interruptions. Audience and actors were on friendly terms with each other, as they were in far closer contact than the theatre of to-day allows them to be. The actors were coached by the dramatist himself, and when that dramatist was Shakespeare, he insisted, gently but firmly, that things should be done as he wanted them. Comic scenes never degenerated into ragging, nor tragic scenes into ranting. The boys who acted women's parts were not tempted to " steal the play ". Throughout his whole career Shakespeare showed himself completely at home in the theatre, which was his full-time job; in this he differed from University men like Greene and Peele, who wrote plays, rather disdainfully, because no other means of making money was open to them. To his close contact with the theatre is due, in part, Shakespeare's pre-eminence as a dramatist; his pre-eminence as a poet is due partly to the gifts which nature prodigally showered upon him, and partly to

what a contemporary called his "right happy and copious industry".

The most important of Shakespeare's contemporaries was his friendly rival **Benjamin Jonson** (1573-1637), usually during his lifetime and now invariably known as "Ben". He was the posthumous son of a Puritan minister, and was educated at Westminster. His powerful and massive intellect enabled him to become a first-rate classical scholar. After being apprenticed to a bricklayer, he turned soldier for a time, but soon began to work for the Admiral's company both as playwright and actor. Some of his early plays were probably written in collaboration and were regarded by their author as hack-work, and so are not preserved. He slew a fellow-actor in a duel, was imprisoned for satirizing the Scots in a play, went to France as tutor to Sir Walter Raleigh's elder son, and, at the age of forty-six carried his twenty stone of "too too solid flesh" to Scotland on foot. During his later years Jonson gathered round him many young men who loved to be called his sons and to be "sealed of the tribe of Benjamin"; he reigned over a sort of club which met in the Apollo Room of the Devil Tavern. He died at the age of sixty-four, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Jonson's earliest play may have been *The Case is Altered*, a good enough but not typically Jonsonian play. His first great play, *Every Man in his Humour*, appeared in 1598. Shakespeare was one of the cast, and there is a strong tradition that the play was accepted on his recommendation. This play is of the greatest importance in English dramatic history, and is in itself an amusing and spontaneous play, which its author was not able to surpass for some seven years. Its companion-piece, *Every Man out of his Humour*, is much less pleasing.

There is an undercurrent of bitterness running through it, and its humorous characters are caricatures of impossible persons. It has, however, several amusing scenes. *Cynthia's Revels*, performed in 1600 by the children of the Queen's Chapel, is a return to allegorical comedy of the type written by Lyly. It is well written, but has lost much of the sparkle which it originally possessed. *The Poetaster*, a counter-attack upon his rivals Dekker and Marston, is a much livelier play. Jonson now grew disappointed with his success as a writer of comedies, and resolved to transfer his attentions to tragedy. *Sejanus* is the result. It is a carefully-written tragedy, which adheres most faithfully to the Latin authorities, but it has little action, and fails to give almost everything that is required in a tragedy. A similar verdict may be given on the other tragedy, *Catiline*. In 1605 Jonson's masterpiece, *Volpone*, was acted both at The Globe and at the two Universities. It is a scathing satire on greed and avarice. It is a well-constructed and marvellously clever play, but its subject is repellent; though it is called a comedy it does not raise a single laugh or smile. *Epicoene, or the Silent Woman* is a masterpiece of farce, and is well constructed, though, like some of Barrie's plays, it is based upon a trick, and is less effective when seen or read for the second time. *The Alchemist* is another masterpiece; it is also a satire on greed and sensuality. The last of the great plays is *Bartholomew Fair*, a realistic farce which depicts low life in London with admirable, if sometimes unsavoury, fidelity. *The Devil is an Ass* marks a distinct decline. In it Jonson revived some of the features of the old morality-play, and though there is an amusing satire upon the "projectors" of the time, the play as a whole is neither well constructed nor witty. He did not write any more stage-plays for nine

years, when *The Staple of News* appeared. It is a curious mixture of allegory and the old Greek comedy of Aristophanes. *The New Inn* was a complete failure, and was not heard to the end. It is a play with a romantic plot more absurd than can be easily imagined. *The Magnetic Lady* was intended to complete the cycle of plays dealing with " humour ", but it is a feeble play in comparison with its companion pieces. *A Tale of a Tub* is a country farce, with no pretence to depth. When Jonson died he left behind him almost three acts of a beautiful pastoral play, *The Sad Shepherd.* It has a rich vein of poetry and fancy in it, and makes us revise some of our opinions about its author.

Among a crowd of somewhat shadowy contemporaries, the figure of Jonson stands out solid and well defined. *We have a clear picture of him fighting his* battles with sword and with pen, giving no quarter and expecting none. His theory of " humour ", which was that every man had a master-passion which controlled all his actions, drove him to draw caricatures rather than human beings; but he gives, in his rather distorted mirror, an admirable reflexion of the manners and customs of his time. He is perhaps the weightiest of all the Elizabethans after Shakespeare, and yet his plays are little read and hardly ever acted. His qualities arouse admiration rather than enthusiasm. He was an untiring workman with a strong sense of his own importance and an ever-present idea of the sacred nature of his mission as a poet. Much of his work is devoid of charm, whimsicality, and the capriciousness of the Comic Muse. The saving grace of nonsense rarely comes to his rescue. Yet he is a colossal figure in English letters, and is always wise and weighty in his thought. Above all, he is transparently honest, delightfully uncompromising, and unflinchingly manly in everything that he

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George Chapman (1559–1634), who is chiefly remembered for his translation of Homer, wrote some plays of merit as well. *All Fools* is an excellent play in which Terence's matter and Jonson's manner are blended and suffused with something that is Chapman's own. In 1605 Chapman collaborated with Jonson and Marston in the admirable but unfortunate comedy *Eastward Ho!*, and suffered a term of imprisonment. Among his other plays may be mentioned *The Gentleman Usher*, *Bussy d'Ambois*, and *May Day*. He collaborated once or twice with Shirley, and may have written some part of one or two other plays of slight value which are often attributed to him. Chapman was not intended by nature to be a dramatist. He never learnt the art of handling his puppets with skill. His tragedies are full of fiery energy and richness of phrase and imagery, but are lacking in truly dramatic qualities. Chapman's whole intellectual life was governed by his admiration for Homer, and when he wrote drama its excellences were those of epic poetry.

Little is known about the life of **Thomas Dekker** (1570–1641). It is unlikely that he was a University man; it is certain that he was almost always short of money, and that his enormous output of plays and pamphlets was primarily due to sheer want. We also know that in all his misfortunes he retained a singularly happy outlook; his humanity, in the broadest sense of that word, is second only to that of Shakespeare. It is impossible to mention here all Dekker's numerous plays. *Old Fortunatus* is a pleasant retelling of an old story, and is among the best of them. *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is a very amusing play dealing with citizen life. *Satiromastix*, which was written in collaboration with Marston, is their ill-constructed but good-tempered rejoinder to the bitter attack which Jonson had made

upon them in *The Poetaster*. *Patient Grissell* is a good but not a masterly version of the story told by Chaucer's Clerk of Oxford. Other plays are *Match me in London*, *The Wonder of a Kingdom*, and *The Witch of Edmonton*. Of several of these plays Dekker was only part-author. Dekker had an enormous gust for life, and an ability to extract humour from anything. When he crossed swords with Jonson his skilfully manipulated rapier was more than a match for Jonson's two-handed engine. As Charles Lamb said, "Dekker had poetry enough for *anything*"; as well as this gift of poetry he had a gift of realism, the two making a striking combination. His lyrics are among the best of those written in that great age.

John Marston (1575–1634) was a man of a peculiar temperament, which he possibly owed to his mother, who was an Italian. He was educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, and began his literary career as a poet and satirist, before he took to the composition of plays. At the age of thirty-four he took holy orders and wrote no more for the stage. *Antonio and Mellida*, a tragedy in two parts, was published in 1602. *The Malcontent*, a better but far from perfect play, appeared two years later. It was dedicated to Ben Jonson, and was probably intended as a peace-offering after one of the many quarrels between the two dramatists. *Parasitaster* and *What You Will* are two noteworthy comedies.

Marston can hardly be classed among the greater Elizabethan dramatists. He had, without doubt, very great abilities, but he did not make the most of them. Rant and uncertainty of taste mar much of his work, though now and again he has short passages of great beauty. In leaving the stage for the pulpit he showed that the days of his youth were over, and that his true bent did not lie in dramatic composition.

Thomas Heywood (*d.* 1650) himself tells us that he had "either an entire hand or at the least a main finger" in two hundred and twenty plays. This gigantic total is not quite so astonishing when we remember that his dramatic career stretched over at least thirty-seven years, so that he wrote on an average half a dozen plays a year, a notable but not an incredible feat. Only about twenty-four of his plays remain. As may be easily imagined, Heywood wrote without great effort, and was a popular entertainer rather than an artist. He is said to have written his plays on the backs of tavern-bills (which would account for the loss of many of them) and to have demanded from himself a daily ration of so many words. His masterpiece is *A Woman killed with Kindness*, an admirably constructed drama of domestic life, full of pathos and realism of the best kind. *The Fair Maid of the West* is an attractive play with a pleasing smack of adventure and the sea about it, and *The English Traveller* is an even better play on somewhat similar lines, and ranks perhaps second among its author's dramatic works. Heywood did not entertain any exaggerated idea of the importance of his own work, but described himself as "the youngest and weakest of the nest wherein he was hatched". He was, however, a man of admirable talent, and particularly excelled in domestic drama, in plays which dealt with middle-class life and everyday happenings. Like Dekker he was a lover of London, and was a man of pleasin modesty and industrious versatility.

Of more importance than the plays of Heywood a those of Beaumont and Fletcher. **Francis Beaumo** (1584–1616) was the son of a judge of the comm pleas, and **John Fletcher's** (1579–1625) father Bishop of London. They first met in 1607 or the abouts, and soon became the closest of friends;

lived together in a house in Southwark, and are said to have had all things in common, even down to their clothes. This close companionship lasted for only some six years, when Beaumont married an heiress, and probably went to live in the country. In 1616 Beaumont died, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. Very little is known of Fletcher after he lost his partner; he died of the plague in 1625, and was buried at St. Saviour's, Southwark.

Beaumont and Fletcher have been aptly called the great twin brethren of Jacobean drama. So closely, indeed, are their names linked together in literary tradition that they resemble Siamese rather than ordinary twins. Bryant is not more closely linked to May, nor Liddell to Scott. It is, therefore, probably a surprise to most readers when they learn that comparatively few of the fifty-odd plays which are traditionally labelled "Beaumont and Fletcher" are the work of the two celebrated collaborators. The truth is that "Beaumont and Fletcher" became a kind of formula—something in the nature of a registered trade-mark. It is now believed that only about nine of the plays (some of these, however, among the best) were written by Beaumont and Fletcher; two are the work of Beaumont alone; fifteen are the work of Fletcher alone, some eighteen are by Fletcher and Massinger; some four are by Fletcher and some other collaborator; and in five or six neither Beaumont nor Fletcher had any appreciable share.

It is usually said that Fletcher contributed the wit and Beaumont the judgment to the plays which they wrote together, and that Beaumont's function was to act as a kind of brake upon Fletcher's runaway genius. But, though we know much more about Fletcher's work than we do about Beaumont's, this idea is probably wrong,

or at any rate requires very considerable modification. We do know that Beaumont was a man of higher seriousness than his partner, and had the complementary gift of excelling in burlesque or mock-heroic writing. Fletcher's fluent and facile genius excelled in comedy or tragi-comedy rather than tragedy; and he had a great gift for writing lyrics—beautiful songs unequalled by any save those of Shakespeare. Of all the plays *The Maid's Tragedy*, really by Beaumont and Fletcher, is the most famous; *Bonduca* (Fletcher and someone else) is a fine tragedy based on early British history; *Philaster* (mainly Beaumont) is a good tragi-comedy, with more than a superficial resemblance to *Cymbeline*; while of the comedies none is better than *The Wild-Goose Chase* (Fletcher alone). Other plays of outstanding merit are: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (mainly Beaumont); *A King and no King* (Beaumont and Fletcher); Fletcher's beautiful pastoral play *The Faithful Shepherdess*; *The Woman's Prize* (Fletcher), a pleasing sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew*; *Sir John van Olden Barnavelt* (Fletcher and Massinger), acted in August, 1619, and founded on the events of the previous May; and *The Beggars' Bush*, also by Fletcher and Massinger. But indeed in all the other plays, which are too numerous to mention, a very high standard of competence is maintained.

In some respects Beaumont and Fletcher stand apart from their fellow-dramatists. They were both of gentle birth, and Beaumont at any rate was in easy circumstances and probably shared his affluence with his friend. It is not to be wondered at that they had the reputation of representing polite conversation on the stage better than any other contemporary dramatist. Their plays are good in passages, and must have been most effective on the stage; Fletcher, in particular, was

a master of stage-craft. They never hang fire, and have plenty of incident and plot in them, in that respect comparing most favourably with the work of Jonson and his school. In many plays two stories are combined into one, in an attempt to double the interest. Their plots are, however, artificial, and their characters stagy. And yet, in many ways, "Beaumont and Fletcher" stand next to Shakespeare among contemporary dramatists. Jonson and Marlowe are writers of heavier metal; Beaumont and Fletcher are "metal more attractive". Their plays are, however, more entertaining than instructive, and fall short of absolute greatness owing to a certain slightness in their texture.

The life of **John Webster** (1580–1625 ?) is perhaps more completely in obscurity than that of any other important Elizabethan. We do not know when he was born or when he died, where he was educated or how he earned his living. In his early days he wrote several unimportant plays in collaboration; his reputation rests upon his two masterpieces, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfy*, of which the latter is even more masterly than the former. In these two plays Webster has raised melodrama to the plane of tragedy, and has shown himself to be the nearest to Shakespeare among his contemporaries as a writer of tragedies. He had the restraint of a true master, and he saw deeply into the hearts of men. Jonson was a weightier man of letters, Marlowe a greater poet, Beaumont and Fletcher excelled him as popular entertainers; but Webster's tragedies share with Shakespeare's the quality of inevitableness.

With Webster it is customary to class **Cyril Tourneur** (1575–1626), whose fame also rests entirely on two tragedies. *The Atheist's Tragedy* is immature; *The Revenger's Tragedy* is a much stronger and more finished play. As dramas both plays leave much to be desired.

They have little dramatic power, and their characters are caricatures. It is the force and flow of Tourneur's poetry that distinguishes his work. "Chaos and old Night" brood over his plays; and the sensational element in them is too prominent. In gloom and in tragic cynicism he resembles Webster; it has been said that Tourneur is to Webster as Webster is to Shakespeare.

Thomas Middleton (1570–1627) held for the last seven years of his life the minor official post of City Chronologer. He wrote many of his plays in collaboration with other dramatists, especially Dekker and Rowley. He wrote with much fluency, and his plays were written under the uncomfortable necessity of having to get them finished by a certain date. Yet much of his work is memorable and some good. *The Changeling* (written with Rowley) is perhaps his masterpiece, and has one scene which for insight into character is unsurpassed save by Shakespeare. *A Game at Chess* is an excellent play. Under the thin disguise of pieces and pawns, the characters of this play were those English and Spanish personages who were involved in the matter of the Spanish marriage. The Spanish ambassador, whose predecessor was satirized as the Black Knight, got a stop put to this play after a run of nine days. The play was an instant success, and in spite of its short run it brought in £1500, an immense sum of money in those days. Middleton was fined and perhaps also imprisoned. In this play, which is a criticism not of city manners and customs, but of diplomacy and international politics, Middleton reached a height to which he never again attained in comedy. He had a great poetic and dramatic talent which was somewhat hampered by the necessity of his earning his bread.

The work of **William Rowley** (1585–1642) is in-

extricably interwoven with that of other men. Four extant plays, none of them of great merit, are said to be entirely his work; he owes his fame to his collaborations with Wilkins and Day, with Heywood, Massinger, Dekker, Ford, and Webster, but especially with Middleton. Middleton and Rowley were ideal partners, and each had a good influence upon the work of the other. Rowley was probably in demand so often as a collaborator because he had an actor's knowledge of practical stage-craft.

In his early days **Philip Massinger** (1583–1640) also almost invariably collaborated, sometimes with Dekker, oftener with Fletcher. Of the so-called Beaumont and Fletcher plays, at least eighteen are believed to contain the work of Massinger. When Massinger died, in 1640, he was buried in the same grave as Fletcher. There are nineteen plays extant which are Massinger's in their entirety. Eight other plays were extant in manuscript until the middle of the eighteenth century, when they (with forty-seven other old plays) were used for pie-covers by Betsy Baker, the cook of John Warburton, F.R.S., Somerset Herald, who had got possession of them. Among Massinger's plays may be mentioned: *The Duke of Milan*, a fine tragedy; *The Great Duke of Florence*, a masterpiece of dramatic construction; *The Picture*; *The City Madam*; and his best-known play, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. The last-named play has long been a favourite, and has kept the stage for a long time. Massinger is perhaps the least poetical of all the early dramatists. Not only can he not write lyrics; his blank verse is pedestrian and undistinguished. If, however, he stands low as a poet, as a dramatist he stands among the first. He is a masterly constructor of plots, far surpassing Fletcher, Jonson, or Webster in this respect. He was a man of a far more serious cast of

mind than most of his fellow-playwrights. Some of his plays are as interesting as a novel, others as solid as a treatise on political philosophy. The drama was declining when he was writing, but he did not hasten, though he failed to delay its decline. He must be placed at the head of the Caroline dramatists.

The decline of the drama is clearly seen in the plays of **John Ford** (*fl.* 1639), attractive though some of them undoubtedly are. Ford was a Devonshire man of good family and, in all probability, of independent means. He stands, therefore, a little apart from the writers for the ordinary stage, who were obliged to aim at popularity. His best plays are *The Lover's Melancholy*, *The Broken Heart*, and *Perkin Warbeck*.

After the appearance of the First Folio of Shakespeare in 1623 drama became more literary. This partly explains why Ford's work differs from that of his predecessors. He was able to study the work of the older playwrights in book form and to look forward to having his own plays published eventually. Hence he took more pains than those earlier writers who merely prepared plays to be acted. He was a careful, deliberate workman, who wrote mainly to please himself. Much of his work is marred by sensationalism. All commonplace plots had been already used up, and he seems to have felt that excitement must be maintained at all costs. Hence he deals with subjects untouched by Shakespeare, and introduces scenes like that in which Giovanni rushes to meet his father with the heart of his sister on a dagger. Aristotle in a famous passage tells us that fear, which should be aroused by a tragedy in its spectators, is aroused by the misfortunes of men who resemble those spectators. Ford's heroes and heroines are too exceptional to excite complete sympathy. He had, moreover, no sense of humour, and sinks

below most dramatists of the time in the bad quality of his attempts at comic relief. He was, however, a beautiful writer of blank verse, he had great mastery over some of the technical difficulties of his art, and above all he had a deep knowledge of the passions and contradictory impulses of the human heart.

With the pleasing but not very inspired figure of **James Shirley** (1596–1666) the long and distinguished roll of Elizabethan dramatists, as they are usually called, comes to an end. Shirley was born in London, and educated at both universities; he eventually became a Roman Catholic and a schoolmaster. He wrote in all some thirty-seven plays, among which were *The Cardinal*, *Hyde Park*, and *The Gamester*. For four years he was connected with a theatre in Dublin, and produced at least four plays there. His work appealed to King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria, and was widely popular. His relations with his fellow-dramatists were peculiarly happy; he collaborated with Chapman, Ford, and Massinger, and is believed to have revised many of the "Beaumont and Fletcher" plays, one of which, *The Coronation*, was his unaided work. After playing a small but active part in the Civil War (he was, of course, a Royalist), Shirley retired to London and devoted himself to the composition of Latin grammars. After the Restoration, several of Shirley's plays were revived, but he did not write any new ones. He died as a result of the Great Fire, being "overcome with affrightments, disconsolations, and other miseries". He appears to have been a man of a modest and amiable disposition, and to have had no enemies.

Shirley is important, not so much on his own account, as because he was the last of "the giant race before the flood". His plays, the product of a happy copiousness, run on familiar lines, and are without violence or exagger-

ation. He is a more equal writer than Ford or Massinger, though he does not rise to the heights which they sometimes attain. He was almost the only dramatist of eminence who saw the closing of the theatres by the Puritans in 1642 and lived to see them reopen after the return of Charles II. At his death the last link between the Elizabethan and the Restoration stage was broken.

CHAPTER IV

POETRY FROM 1660 TO THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Though some of Milton's most attractive poems were written long before the Restoration, his longest, weightiest, and most important works were written after that event, and justify his inclusion in this chapter rather than at the end of Chapter I. If in some respects Milton may be regarded as a belated Elizabethan, in most respects he must be regarded as being just himself; owing little to any English predecessor and passing on a tradition so lofty that few were able to sustain it.

John Milton (1608–1674) was born in Bread Street, Cheapside. His father was a prosperous lawyer, a good scholar, and a musician of more than ordinary skill, and took a keen interest in the education of his elder son. He was educated at St. Paul's School and at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he studied hard; though some unpleasantness with the college authorities led to his changing his tutor and perhaps to his rustication, the legend that he was publicly flogged in the hall of Christ's College is a legend and nothing more. Milton went down from Cambridge in 1632, after taking his

master's degree, and went to live with his father, who had retired from business and was residing at Horton, in Buckinghamshire. Here he spent almost six years, which must have been some of the happiest years of his life, in reading and study; in fact he prepared himself carefully for the career of poet. Fortunately for him, his father fell in with his views, and enabled him not only to live without earning anything until he was well over thirty, but also to travel abroad in some comfort. During the years at Horton, Milton wrote *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. In 1638 he started on his foreign tour, which lasted fifteen months. He visited Paris and the principal cities of Italy, returning home in July, 1639, on account of the political situation. His foreign tour had been something of a triumph for a young Englishman who held no public office; but his scholarship, his poetical gifts, his letters of recommendation, and, it may be added, his personal appearance, threw open to him many doors which would have been closed to many a nobleman or gentleman. On his return he set up as a private schoolmaster in a small way. In 1647 Milton's father died and left him a competence, whereupon he moved to High Holborn and gave up teaching. During these years his sole poetical writings appear to have been most of the *Sonnets* and a by no means impressive version of some of the Psalms.

The execution of the king in 1649 was a turning-point in Milton's life. A fortnight after Charles's death he published his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, a defence of the regicides' policy. His reward was immediate. He was appointed Latin secretary to the Council of State. His principal duty, for which he was admirably qualified, was to turn foreign dispatches into Latin, and he discharged this and other duties with characteristic

vigour and efficiency. Unfortunately the work was too much for his eyesight, which was already impaired by excessive study, and he became totally blind in 1652. His blindness and the death of Cromwell did not affect his tenure of the secretaryship; but the Restoration, in which he refused to believe until it had taken place, altered his whole mode of life. He was obliged to conceal himself, and feared severe if not extreme penalties; and he found himself in straitened circumstances, though not in actual need.

About the year 1658 Milton began the composition of *Paradise Lost*, which occupied him for some five years. The poem was originally planned many years before as a drama. A notebook of Milton's, preserved in Trinity College, Cambridge, gives a list of ninety-nine possible subjects for a long poem. Fifty-three of these subjects are taken from the Old Testament, eight from the Gospels, thirty-three from British history, and five from Scottish history. The poem was dictated in batches of twenty or thirty lines to whoever happened to be at hand. Its publication was delayed until 1667 by the Great Plague and the Great Fire. Milton received £5 for the poem, and was to receive a further £5 upon the sale of each of the first three editions. The first edition of thirteen hundred copies was sold by April, 1669, so that the poem enjoyed at once a fair amount of popularity, considering its difficulty, its unusual metre, and the politics of its author. The idea that *Paradise Lost* was written into popularity by Addison in the *Spectator* is or was widespread, but is quite erroneous. The sequel to the great poem was suggested, it is said, by Milton's young Quaker friend Thomas Ellwood, who said to him, on seeing the complete manuscript of the earlier poem, "Thou hast said much here of Paradise Lost, but what hast thou to say of Paradise Found?"

Paradise Regained was published, together with *Samson Agonistes*, in 1671. Milton did not like to hear it compared unfavourably with its forerunner, but it is not correct to say it was his favourite of the two. In *Samson Agonistes* Milton kept the promise which he had made to himself many years before of writing a drama modelled upon a Greek tragedy. It is a somewhat austere poem, lacking in action, the essential feature of drama, but it is a noble work, and of much autobiographical interest. Milton had suffered from gout for many years, and died of it on 8th November, 1674. He was buried in St Giles's, Cripplegate.

Milton's work is divided into three periods with unusual clearness. In his first period, which may be regarded as ending when he returned to England in 1639, he wrote various short or occasional poems, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*. In his second period, which ended roughly when Cromwell died, he wrote nothing but controversial [illegible] didactic prose and a few sonnets. In his third period he wrote his two epic poems and *Samson Agonistes*.

In his earliest English poems Milton [illegible] showed his distinctive style, his nobility of [illegible] and his grandeur of rhythm. The comp[illegible] *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, which depict two [illegible] moods rather than two different men, [illegible] their way and are written in a metre which is [illegible] adapted to the subject. As Dr. Johnson says, [illegible] man that reads them, reads them with [illegible] *Arcades* is perhaps somewhat sketchy, [illegible] which is not a masque in the Jonsonian sense, [illegible] opinion of some, Milton's most perfect poem. [illegible] written on the death of Milton's college [illegible] very intimate friend) Edward King, is a [illegible] and Johnson's strictures upon it, as [illegible]

throw more light upon the critic than upon the poem. Had Milton written no more poems than those of his first period, he would still rank as one of our greatest poets, and as a master of metre second only to Spenser, if to him.

To most of his readers, however, Milton is above all the author of *Paradise Lost.* To give any analysis of this great poem would be superfluous; it is sufficient to say that it puts its author on an equality, not perhaps with Homer, but with Virgil and Dante. It is an example of what Arnold called "the grand style"; it is indeed perhaps the greatest example in any language of that style, and it sustains that style almost throughout its entirety with miraculous power. The absolute command of language and metre which Milton displays is another remarkable feature of the poem; he is a greater metrist even than Spenser, and the improvements which he introduced into blank verse have never themselves been improved upon. The chief of these improvements, perhaps, in the verse-paragraph. The defects of the poem are that there is perhaps too much debate and not enough action in certain books, and that the whole theme is a little remote from the ordinary concerns of men. *Paradise Regained* has never equalled its predecessor in popularity, and suffers still more from lack of action, but it has some ardent admirers. In it too, and in *Samson Agonistes*, are to be found the same grandeur of phrase and majesty of metre which are in all his poems.

Almost universal opinion ranks Milton as second only to Shakespeare among English poets. His popularity is by no means so widespread as Shakespeare's, nor is it perhaps so great as it was in the days when, almost alone among poets, he was immune from banishment on Sundays. In his great poems he combines

"all the light of the Greeks with all the fire of the Hebrews". The man who is deaf to the harmonies of Milton has "no music in himself, nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds".

In character, politics and literary output there is perhaps no greater contrast to Milton in all our literature than **Samuel Butler** (1612–1680), whom the accidents of chronology place beside him. Butler was the son of a Worcestershire farmer, and held several secretarial posts in the households of noblemen and persons of importance. The first part of his great work *Hudibras* appeared in 1663, the second in 1664, and the third and last fourteen years later, in 1678. The poem became at once immensely popular, as its bitter satire on the Roundheads exactly suited the taste of Charles II and his court. Charles carried the poem everywhere with him, and gave away numerous copies to his friends. The treatment which Butler received from the king and court has become almost proverbial as an instance of literary genius being ill-rewarded; but there is some evidence that the king gave the poet £300—no mean reward in those days—and would have helped him in some more permanent way had he not found him morose and difficult. But he died of consumption on 25th September, 1680, two years after publishing the third part of his poem. It ends somewhat abruptly, and it is probable that, had he lived, Butler would have extended it. In 1759 two volumes of Butler's *Remains* were published; they contain, amongst other things, a clever satire on the newly-founded Royal Society, entitled *The Elephant in the Moon*, and an interesting series of prose *Characters*.

It is not surprising that *Hudibras* should have won instantaneous popularity; that is should still retain a position not far removed from that of a classic is more

remarkable. It is brilliantly clever, and lends itself to apt quotation, but its wit is too bitter, its characters are too like scarecrows, its action is too slight, and its argumentative passages are too long. Even its ingenious but seldom perfect double and triple rhymes, which gave the poem no small part of its charm in the eyes of its contemporaries, do not satisfy us, who are acustomed to see similar metrical pranks played perfectly by such writers as W. S. Gilbert and C. S. Calverley. *Hudibras*, however, lives chiefly in the innumerable quotations it has provided; there cannot be many books so frequently quoted and so seldom read through. To read through *Hudibras*, indeed, is no mean feat of endurance; those who have accomplished it are apt to lament that Butler poured so much genius and learning into so unworthy a vessel. We may wish that Butler had written otherwise than he did; but there is no doubt that in *Hudibras* he accomplished exactly what he set out to perform. His chief strength is in his learning, in his extraordinary power of framing comparisons between things dissimilar, and in his mastery over his peculiar form of verse. His chief weakness is in the extreme barbarity of his satire and the ribaldry of some of his humour. *Hudibras* was edited in a full and scholarly manner by the learned Dr. Zachary Grey in 1744. It was, perhaps, the first English book to acquire a commentary written on classical lines.

Edmund Waller (1606–1687) came of an old and wealthy family, and was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge. He was elected a member of parliament when little more than a boy, and had a long and brilliant, though not always honourable, career in the House. He eventually became the Nestor of the assembly, and played the part with much dignity and charm. His *Panegyric to my Lord Protector* gained him

the appointment of Commissioner of Trade. After the Restoration he wrote a poem, *To the King, upon His Majesty's Happy Return.* When the king complained that the former poem was superior to the latter, the poet replied with happy promptitude, "Sir, we poets never succeed so well in writing truth as in fiction". Waller lived long enough to give good advice, which was not taken, to James II, and died at Beaconsfield in 1687, in his eighty-second year.

Waller enjoyed, during his lifetime and for some while after his death, a great reputation as a poet. He was a careful writer, and the merit of much of his work consists in the absence of faults rather than in any positive virtues. As a lyric poet he is chiefly remembered by one poem, *Go, lovely Rose!* As a writer of heroic couplets he is famous for having effected a revolution in that metre. He introduced, or at any rate popularized, the self-contained couplet, thus preparing the way for Dryden and Pope. Some of his fame was doubtless due to his social position, his charm of manner, and his ready eloquence. His poetry lacks sincerity and strength, though it has smoothness as well as sweetness. Unlike the contemporaries of his early days, Waller avoided conceits and far-fetched ingenuities in his verses; in that respect his influence on English poetry was as wholesome as it was profound His style is often perfect; his treatment of his subject-matter is as often dry and heartless.

With Waller it is customary to couple Sir John Denham (1615–1669), the son of a Baron of the Exchequer, and a prominent Royalist. Denham was secretary to Charles I for a time, and after the Restoration was made Surveyor-General of Works, in which capacity he organized the coronation ceremony in 1661, and was created a Knight of the Bath in return for his

he trounced in *Mac Flecknoe*, an admirable satire which forty years later inspired Pope to write *The Dunciad*. The second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* was mainly the work of Nahum Tate, but Dryden contributed at least two hundred lines of his best work. In the same year appeared *Religio Laici*, an able exposition of Dryden's views as a somewhat lukewarm member of the Church of England. Some passages of this poem are as good as anything Dryden wrote; he had the power of writing first-rate verse on subjects which, in other hands, refuse to be treated poetically. Soon after the accession of James, Dryden became a Roman Catholic, and defended his new religion in *The Hind and the Panther*, a poem in which the milk-white hind represents the Roman Catholic Church and the panther, a fair beast but spotted, the Anglican. This poem, though admirable in places, was not very happily conceived as a whole, and was ridiculed by Charles Montagu and Matthew Prior in a very well-turned parody.

The Revolution put an end to Dryden's regular income. He not only lost his posts of Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal, but had the additional mortification of seeing his rival Shadwell, who had nothing to recommend him except his politics, appointed to both vacancies. In his last years he increased his precarious income by numerous translations, which at that time were regarded with a veneration scarcely less than that given to original work. The famous translation of Virgil appeared in 1697. It was regarded as a work of national importance, as a credit to English scholarship, and it put a large sum of money, perhaps as much as £1200, into its author's pocket. Dryden was so competent a workman that he could not fail in any task which he set himself, but he and Virgil were ill-mated, and his translation is not worthy of the original. Dry-

den's last book, *Fables Ancient and Modern*, appeared in the year in which he died, and contained some of his best work. It is a curious miscellany, containing a rendering of the first book of the *Iliad*, translations from Ovid, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, and some original poems. *Alexander's Feast*, one of the best of his odes, was written for a musical society in 1697, when it was separately published. His health gradually failed; gout attacked him early in 1700, and he died on 1st May of that year. He was buried in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

There are many more inspired writers than Dryden; there is perhaps no English writer who succeeded so well in so many different branches of writing. As a verse-satirist, Dryden has no equal in any language. The best passages of *Absalom and Achitophel* are unapproached for the vigour of their satire, a vigour which is more pleasing than Pope's malignity. As a master of metre, Dryden compares favourably with all our poets, except some of the greatest. As a writer of odes, Dryden stands high. As a translator, he is good though by no means perfect. Above all, he is a master-craftsman, and his work makes a special appeal to all fellow-craftsmen, to those who are men of letters rather than creative artists. There are heights which Dryden cannot reach; but he stands among the very best of those poets whose appeal is to the intellect rather than the heart. He predominated over his age as much as Pope, Johnson, or Tennyson did over theirs; and held a position as literary dictator which no one had held since Ben Jonson.

After a short interregnum, Dryden was succeeded as the leading poet of the day by Alexander Pope (1688–1744). The interregnum was very short, considering that Pope was two generations younger than Dryden. Pope

was the delicate only child of a Roman Catholic linen-draper. Owing to his health or his religion or both he did not attend any good school or college, and was largely self-taught. Although he assimilated much knowledge of various kinds and was indefatigable in his devotion to his books, he was never a scholar. His religion closed the learned professions to him, and his physique rendered him unfit for commercial life, so he early decided to devote himself to literature. His genius lay in an infinite capacity for taking pains, and at a very early age he set himself to acquire a perfect style. He apprenticed himself to the art of poetry with the greatest ardour. He studied widely, and experimented in translating and adapting. Dryden, whom he had once seen, was his model, and in imitation of him he "translated" some Chaucer, and made a version of a book of the Latin poet Statius. Work of this kind increased his powers, and developed his great natural gifts as a metrist. His *Pastorals* were published in 1709; and the *Essay on Criticism* appeared in 1711. It is an astonishingly mature poem, for Pope was only twenty-one when he wrote and twenty-three when he published it. It is full of sound precepts and brilliantly written. It was intended to express in the choicest language some of the commonplaces of contemporary criticism, and could not have attained its object more fully than it has done. *The Rape of the Lock* appeared in its original form in 1712; in 1714 it appeared in its final and greatly improved form, with the "machinery" of sylphs and gnomes added. It remains the greatest of mock-heroic poems.

In 1713 Pope definitely embarked upon the enterprise of translating Homer. This work was published by subscription, and most of the eminent men of the day gave their support to the undertaking. The *Iliad* was published between 1715 and 1720, and the *Odyssey*

(in which two collaborators assisted) in 1725 and 1726. He cleared nearly £9000 by his Homer, this being the first instance in English literature of a substantial fortune made by a book. He invested his money securely, and lived in comfort for the rest of his life. His translation, though it has been called "Homer in a tie-wig", has the merit of being readable. His *Iliad* is undoubtedly far better than his *Odyssey*, as the heroic couplet was much more suitable for the battle-scenes of the earlier than for the domesticities of the later poem. From his labours on Homer, Pope gained complete and absolute mastery in the art of using the heroic couplet to express anything which he wanted to say.

In 1725 Pope published an edition of Shakespeare's plays in six volumes. This edition embroiled him in a quarrel with the critic Lewis Theobald, who became the hero of *The Dunciad*, which first appeared in 1728. In a later edition—fourteen years later—Theobald was dethroned, and the Poet Laureate, Colley Cibber, reigned in his stead. *The Dunciad* cannot be reckoned a very entertaining poem nowadays. It is so full of personalities that it ranks as a lampoon rather than as a satire, and much of its venom is directed against men who should have been beneath Pope's notice, the hirelings of Grub Street, who had to live by the sale of their wits. Pope's eminent victims were curiously selected. Theobald was a good critic, Cibber a highly entertaining man, and Bentley the first classical scholar of that or any other age. *The Dunciad* shows Pope's gifts as a consummate craftsman as clearly as any of his works, but it is not a pleasant poem to read, nor does it increase our respect for Pope who, we feel, abused in it his great powers to gratify his personal spite against those whom he considered to be his enemies. Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733) was largely an exposition of the

clear but shallow philosophy of Lord Bolingbroke. It is brilliantly written, and full of phrases which have become part of the language. The *Moral Essays* and *Imitations of Horace* (dazzlingly original in spite of its title) contain much of Pope's best work. No poems in all English literature are more vigorous and terse.

Pope's feeble body was that of a middle-aged man before he was thirty; at forty he was an old man. He lived to be fifty-six, passing peacefully away on 30th May, 1744. For many years he was so weak that he had to wear a bodice of stiff canvas; three pairs of stockings concealed the tenuity of his legs. In making an estimate of Pope as a man and as an author it is necessary always to bear in mind his physical infirmities. It was his deformed body which made him supersensitive, and it was his supersensitiveness which made him so unforgiving an enemy. His good qualities were numerous and vital: he was a devoted son to both his parents, a faithful friend to those who were faithful to him, and honourably independent as a literary man. The worst of his faults was vanity, which made him conceal the amount of sheer hard work his poems cost him, and caused him to attribute to his extreme youth work done or at any rate revised at a later date.

As a poet Pope was long immoderately praised, and then the pendulum swung and he was unduly depreciated. He has been attacked as a corrupter of taste and the founder of a school of machine-made poetry. The truth is that he was the chief ornament and culminating point of a school rather than its head or founder. He simply brought to perfection the poetical methods of Waller, Dryden, and others. He gave the heroic couplet a polish and an air of easiness; after he had written it became easy for any competent literary workman to write passably good couplets. He was a scrupulous

reviser of his work, as careful as Tennyson, and a better self-critic. Few poets have written more lines and phrases which are constantly quoted. As a master of writing he has hardly an equal. He could always say exactly what he wanted to say in the most telling way possible. That he did not always want to say what was true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report does not lessen his gifts as a stylist. His keen, incisive lines will live when much so-called "natural" poetry is forgotten.

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) and **Oliver Goldsmith** (1728–1774) are essentially writers of prose, but they both made important contributions to eighteenth-century verse. In 1738 Johnson published his poem *London*, which is a free imitation of the third Satire of Juvenal. It is a fine poem, not unworthy of the original. While at work on the Dictionary he wrote his second Juvenalian poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, a noble adaptation of the tenth Satire Johnson had not Pope's command over the heroic couplet, but his lines are sonorous and weighty. Goldsmith's longer poems, *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, are excellent poems of a didactic kind, exquisitely expressed, and both containing many lines which have passed into the language. *The Traveller* made Goldsmith's reputation, and helped him into the best literary society in London. There has been much debate as to whether the deserted village of Auburn is Lissoy in Ireland or an English village. It appears to be a composite village, English in its prosperity, Irish in its adversity. His lighter poems, *The Haunch of Venison* and *Retaliation* especially, are delightful. *Retaliation* is a masterpiece of urbane satire, which combines compliment and banter while describing the characters of his friends, such as Garrick, Burke, and Reynolds.

in more or less Miltonic blank verse. Its descriptions of nature are vivid and accurate, and were written from direct observation. Fauns, Dryads, and other such wild-fowl are conspicuously absent from his pages. *The Task* firmly established Cowper's poetic fame. *Tirocinium*, an attack on public schools, is in his less pleasing because more satiric vein. The translation of Homer, begun in 1784, occupied Cowper for the next six years, and was published in 1791. He translated his regular forty lines a day, and enjoyed his task. His translation cannot be called a failure, but it is certainly not a success. Dullness is its chief fault, but it is not fortunate in its metre, which is blank verse. The revision of his Homer and the composition of some short pieces occupied the last years of his life, which were spent at East Dereham, in Norfolk. He died on 25th April, 1800.

Few poets have been less revolutionary in their characters than Cowper, and yet he undoubtedly heralded the revolution in poetry which was led by Wordsworth and Coleridge. He did this simply by being natural, simply by being himself. The contrast between a poem such as *The Task* and even an excellent artificial poem like *The Traveller* is most marked. The spirit of Pope was ever sitting at Goldsmith's elbow; we know that Cowper disliked Pope as a Homeric translator and as a letter-writer, and we may conjecture that he did not subscribe to the Popian theory of the art of poetry in general. The chief element of Cowper's poetry are a love of nature and a faithful description of her, a strong sympathy with animals and with the weak and oppressed among mankind, playful humour, and tender pathos. He is not strong enough nor well-enough acquainted with life to rank as a great poet; among poets of the secondary kind he is one of the most charming and companionable. The story of his life is one of

the saddest in the annals of English literature; his mild spirit was overwhelmed by the harsh barbarities of a false system of belief; his religion, which should have been his comfort, was his bane. But even his constant thoughts about his own eternal perdition could not destroy his love for God and man, or eradicate his gentle humour.

Thomas Gray (1716–1771), perhaps our most learned poet, was educated at Eton and Peterhouse, Cambridge; after going for a long continental tour he returned to Cambridge, through lack of a more definite occupation, and spent most of the rest of his life there, though he never held a fellowship. In February, 1751, he published the famous *Elegy*; it had probably been drafted some seven years previously, but the work of polishing it was slow. He only published it when he did because a pirated version had been issued. His other principal poems were: *The Progress of Poesy*, *The Bard*, *The Descent of Odin*, *The Triumphs of Owen*, and *The Death of Hoel*. Gray refused the Laureateship, but accepted the chair of modern history at Cambridge, a post which in those days entailed no duties. He died, after a brief illness, on 24th July, 1771.

Gray is perhaps the least productive of all the greater English poets, if he be, as he usually is, admitted to their number. No man has won so large a reputation with so small an amount of work. There are several causes to account for his small output. He seldom enjoyed robust health, and seems to have lived in a state of gentle melancholy. He was not obliged to work for his living. Above all, he bore a great load of learning. He was reputed to be the most learned man in Europe. He was one of the best classical scholars of his day. He knew the literature and history of England, of F- and of Italy. He was interested in criticism, meta-

eighteenth century", and Browning placed its author "with Milton and with Keats". On a more balanced view *A Song to David* is not the work of a lunatic or of a great genius; it is ill-arranged, wearisome, and full of repetitions; but what makes it noteworthy is that, in an age of verse-manufacturing, it appears to be a genuinely-inspired and fervently-conceived poem. Smart was not happy in his choice of metre, as he selected the stanza indissolubly connected for lovers of Chaucer with that exquisite piece of mockery the *Tale of Sir Thopas*.

William Blake (1757–1827), a poet with unique gifts, was an engraver by profession. The art of poetry and the art of design were always closely linked together in his mind. He did not, however, develop his poetical gifts after the age of thirty-seven; his designs improved steadily for many years after that. In 1783 he published his youthful poems, *Poetical Sketches*, without illustrations. It was printed and published in the ordinary way, but, failing to find a publisher for his next work, *Songs of Innocence*, he invented a process by which he was both printer and illustrator of his own poems. He engraved upon copper both the text of his poems and the surrounding decorative design, and to the pages printed from the plates an appropriate colouring was afterwards added by hand. Thus he wrote, illustrated, printed, tinted, and bound his books himself, with the assistance of his devoted wife. In this way almost all his subsequent work was produced. Blake's third and last volume of poetry was his *Songs of Experience* (1794). He also produced many books, both in verse and prose, which are known as "prophetical", which are incomprehensible to the uninitiated, and which appear to combine the thought of the Swedish mystic Swedenborg and the language of the so-called translation of Ossian

written by James Macpherson. The names of some of these books are: *Book of Thel*, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Book of Urizen*, *Song of Los*, and *Book of Ahania*. The designs in the text of these are magnificent. Blake died in 1827, in the seventieth year of his age.

Blake is one of the most isolated figures in English literature. He was not in the slightest degree influenced by his age, nor did he affect his contemporaries to any extent. He lived in a world of his own, peopled with saints and angels. His poems did not become widely popular until the days of Rossetti and Morris. The qualities in his three principal volumes appeal to us more than they did to his contemporaries; besides, his books were not published in the normal way, and were not widely available. He had the genuine gift of song, and some of his songs were written in a kind of ecstasy to airs which he composed himself; they were really intended to be sung. One of the most charming features of his poems is their innocence. Those poems which were intended specially for children are delightful; there is in them no latent moral nor any of the half-concealed condescension which frequently lurks about verses of this kind. They appear to have been written for a child by a child.

The national poet of Scotland, **Robert Burns** (1759–1796), was the son of a farmer, and was for some years his father's chief assistant, afterwards farming on his own account. In 1786 he published a collection of his poems at Kilmarnock in order to defray the cost of his passage to Jamaica; the volume made him famous, and he remained in Scotland. He eventually abandoned farming to take up an appointment in the excise, but his health was impaired and he died at the early age of thirty-seven.

To appreciate Burns to the full it is necessary to have

orn north of the Tweed. This is not merely due occasional difficulties of his vocabulary, though ient consultation of a glossary is apt to rob the poetry of its finest flavour. It is due to the fact t the impalpable spirit of Burns is so national that it nnot be understood save by his fellow-countrymen. t his best, he is one of the greatest lyric poets in the world. When he imitated Gray and the almost forgotten poet Shenstone, he wrote English and produced nothing memorable. But his Scottish songs and poems spring straight from the heart, and therefore go straight to the hearts of those that hear them. His poems have a wide range—from the most rousing of war-songs to the most pathetic of laments, and he has complete mastery over every tone and semitone of humour and pathos. It is impossible to mention the names of even a small fraction of his best poems. *The Jolly Beggars*, a cantata, is remarkable as a work of the highest art and the greatest ease; *Tam o' Shanter* is the most famous of his narrative poems; *The Twa Dogs* is a happily-conceived com parison between the rich and the poor. Other favourit are: *The Cottar's Saturday Night* (not so Scottish a not so inspired as most of the other favourites); *Holy Fair*, a biting satire; *Hallowe'en*; and that ma piece of whimsical drollery, the *Address to the* Even more popular, in the strict sense of that wo Burns's songs. His poems and songs have becor of Scotland; it is hardly too much to say that Scotland. Every phase of Scottish life is mi them; and he is the national poet of his cour even more intimate sense than Homer is th poet of Greece. Every Scot, even if he dis the Act of Union, feels that he need not who should make the laws of his nation, Burns has, once and for all, made his nati

George Crabbe (1754–1832), a Church of England parson, wrote many tales in verse which depict with unflinching realism the life of villages and country-towns. His chief volumes of tales are: *The Village*, *The Parish Register*, *The Borough*, and *Tales in Verse*. He was determined to "hold the mirror up to Nature" as he saw it, and to break away from the ancient pastoral convention. He was too fond of depicting the seamy side of life, but he depicted it as an artist, not as a photographer, thus avoiding one of the principal faults of more recent realists. The peculiar flavour of Crabbe's poetry is due to the contrast between their matter and their manner. Poetically speaking, he is an extreme Radical in his matter, and an ultra-Tory in his manner. His experiments in realism powerfully affected the new school of poetry, and helped to ring the death-knell of the elegant and artificial verse of the eighteenth century; but his verse is the verse of Dryden, and he adhered, with rare exceptions, to the heroic couplet. Crabbe could tell a story well; had the trained eye of a botanist and geologist for stocks and stones; could draw admirable landscapes; and, whether depicting Man or Nature, kept his eye firmly fixed on the object. He links the generation of Burke, Johnson, and Reynolds to that of Wordsworth, Scott, and Byron.

The writings of **Thomas Chatterton** (1752–1770) and the publication of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* both aroused much interest in our older poetry. Chatterton was a Bristol youth who poisoned himself in London before he was eighteen years old. He was a very clever boy, and wrote many poems in sham fifteenth-century English, pretending that they had been composed by a monk of that century named Rowley. Chatterton's precocity as a writer is simply without parallel, and he might have been a great poet

had he lived; but he was not a very accomplished forger. That he deceived the pundits of the Society of Antiquaries was due to their ignorance rather than to his skill. The authenticity of the Rowley poems, however, gave rise to a sharp controversy which led to the study of writers who had really lived in the fifteenth century, and a revived interest in antiquarian lore.

Thomas Percy (1729–1811), afterwards Bishop of Dromore, published his *Reliques* in 1765. This book became widely popular, and did more, perhaps, than any other single publication to bring about the Romantic Revival. Its influence upon Scott, Coleridge, and Wordsworth cannot easily be exaggerated. Literature owes a deep debt to Percy as the first popularizer of our old ballads, though he was a most unreliable editor, and did not scruple to add and alter in order to confer what he considered to be "elegance" on the ancient poems. However, it is quite possible that if he had presented the public with a scientifically edited text, his book would not have been popular. As it was, it awakened a keen and widespread interest in ballads and old poetry, and it hastened the decay of poetry of the artificial school.

The book known as "Ossian" but substantially the work of a Scottish schoolmaster, **James Macpherson** (1736–1796), also had an important influence on the Romantic Revival. Macpherson published *Fingal*, an epic poem in six books, in 1762, and *Temora*, in eight books, in 1763, alleging that they were translations from the Gaelic of Ossian, a bard of the third century A.D. Before publishing these poems, Macpherson travelled widely in the Highlands and Isles to collect material. Opinions differ as to the amount of material he gathered on his journeys; he undoubtedly gathered a good deal of local colour, and something of the spirit if little of

the letter of the old Gaelic writings. About half of the "Ossianic" poems were made up by Macpherson out of his own head. "Ossian" was translated into all the principal European languages, and became a famous book. Most readers to-day find the Ossianic poems quite unreadable; but whatever their value as literature, there is no doubt about their importance in literary history. They supplied European literature with exactly what it wanted. They brought into literature "the lone shieling and the misty island" and various other Celtic stage-properties. Better still, they did more than any other book to drive away the poetry of the town and the drawing-room, and restore the poetry of "old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago". Finally, they turned the attention of the learned world to the Highlands, and so led to a knowledge of genuine Gaelic poetry.

CHAPTER V

PROSE FROM 1660 TO THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

From 1660 onwards English prose became much less ornate, and began to bear a much greater resemblance to the prose of to-day. This was due in part, no doubt, to change of fashion, but it was also in no small measure due to the principles laid down by the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, which was founded in 1660 and granted a charter by Charles II two years later. The Royal Society, in the words of their historian, Thomas Sprat, were determined "to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and

shortness, when men delivered so many things, almost in an equal number of words. They have exacted from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness; bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can; and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen, and merchants, before that of wits or scholars." There is no doubt that these principles spread widely outside the ranks of the Society.

John Dryden (1631–1700), as well as being the chief poet and principal dramatist of his day, was its most eminent prose-writer. His *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, a defence of rhymed drama, is admirable for its critical sagacity, but even more admirable for its easy and delightful style. It is written in the form of a dialogue. Dryden wrote prose with a deceptive fluency; he is not easy to imitate. His numerous prefaces and introductions are models of that kind of writing; few critics have possessed a better-stored or better-balanced mind. His prose is almost always exactly what prose should be: easy without being slipshod, dignified without being stiff.

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) was born more than a generation before Dryden, but he lived to a great old age, and is usually regarded as a post-Restoration writer. His principal work, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth*, was published in 1651. He is not much read nowadays by purely literary students, as he was a political philosopher above all. He wished to have the State supreme in all matters affecting the mutual relations of men. He conceived the state of nature to be one in which all are at war with one another, and government as the result of a compact, suggested by selfishness, for the sake of peace and protection. Absolute rule he thought the best form of government,

but qualified this belief by the assertion that obedience to a ruler is only due so long as he can afford protection to the subject. Hobbes's style is not in itself striking, but is admirably in keeping with his subjects, being plain, vigorous, precise, and luminous.

John Locke (1632–1704) was also a philosopher, general as well as political. His masterpiece, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, appeared in 1690; its composition had occupied his leisure, off and on, since 1671. When he originally planned this work, he thought it would merely fill a single sheet of paper. The same year witnessed the publication of his important political work *Two Treatises on Government*. The interesting little book *Some Thoughts concerning Education* appeared in 1693; *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, the best known of Locke's theological writings, was published two years later. Locke's philosophy, though now discredited in certain details, has had and still has a profound influence on European thought. He was essentially a man of common sense and an acute thinker, though he did not follow all his ideas to their logical conclusions. He was an earnest seeker after truth, and his modesty and moderation have influenced all subsequent philosophers. The main defect of his philosophy is its utter lack of the faintest trace of other-worldliness; it is too pedestrian, too free from the "enthusiasm" which was anathema to the men of the eighteenth century. As a stylist, Locke is admirably sober, lucid, and correct; he is not attractive, and tends, especially in his philosophical writings, to be somewhat arid and bald.

Philosophers, perhaps, are apt to be somewhat inhuman beings; but there is no more human figure in all our literature than that of **Samuel Pepys** (1633–1703), who became immortal in his own despite. Pepys

was educated at St. Paul's School and Magdalene College, Cambridge, and eventually became Secretary of the Admiralty. He was an exemplary official, and did more than any of his contemporaries to make the navy efficient. He lived a very full life, was devoted to music and the drama, and was President of the Royal Society for two years. When Pepys died, in 1703, he left his books, manuscripts, and papers to his old college. Among these books was his diary, filling six quarto volumes and written in shorthand. It was not deciphered and published until more than a hundred and twenty years after its author's death. It at once became famous. It runs from 1st January, 1660, to 31st May, 1669. It is a unique work. It is not merely that it gives a graphic picture of social life at the time of the Restoration, that it gives invaluable accounts of men in high places, and important information about the stage and indeed about countless interesting subjects. It is an unequalled piece of self-revelation. Lovers of Pepys may be said to know him better than they know themselves, because he has recorded not only those things which men do not tell to other men, but also those things which men do not acknowledge even to themselves. It is thus one of the most curious and interesting books in the world. Other diarists we see through a glass, darkly; Pepys we see face to face. The charm of his *Diary* is first and foremost due to its frankness and the informality of its style; but it is also in no small measure due to the gusto with which Pepys lived. He took pleasure in almost every action and thought of his life, and his pleasure is infectious.

A diary of a quite different but none the less valuable kind is that of **John Evelyn** (1620–1706), who took a leading part in the foundation of the Royal Society, and on two occasions was invited to become its President,

but declined on account of ill-health. His *Diary* was not published until 1818, one hundred and twelve years after his death. It is not to be compared with Pepys's *Diary*; it is somewhat lacking in individuality, it does not present us with a complete picture of its author, and it deals with public rather than with purely personal matters. It provides, however, a valuable complement to Pepys, and it is interesting to know that the two diarists, so different in birth, breeding, and nature, knew and esteemed each other. The *Diary* is of the very greatest value, and covers a long period, from 1640 to 1706. Evelyn was a man of most attractive character, grave and dignified, thoroughly conscientious, religious but no precisian, active yet dedicated to a life of gentle melancholy. He was a good observer and a clear writer; he has given us one of the best pictures we possess of a most interesting period of our history—a picture drawn by one who had all the virtues and none of the vices of both parties, and who was neither fanatic nor libertine.

The principal historian of his time was **Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon** (1609-1674), who, by the autumn of 1641, was recognized as the real leader of the king's party in the House of Commons. He became Charles II's Lord Chancellor and right-hand man, and, after Cromwell's death, contributed more than any other man to promote the Restoration. His daughter Anne married the Duke of York and was the mother of two queens—Mary and Anne. He was deprived of office mainly because he was disapproved of by Charles's frivolous court. His most important work is his *History of the Rebellion*, which has a curious literary history It was begun as early as 1646, and was not finished until about 1672. Between 1668 and 1670 Clarendon wrote an autobiography, which he afterwards wove into the substance of his history; the book not only took over

they appeared, not unnaturally overstated their case. In some ways Steele was greater than Addison; he was more modest, more warm-hearted, and more human. As a literary figure, however, though one of the earliest, wisest, and wittiest of English essayists, he ranks quite distinctly below his "auxiliary".

Addison had a very different career from that of his partner. As the son of a dean, he thought of taking holy orders after proceeding M.A. at Oxford, but some influential friends decided to secure his services as a writer for the Whig party. He travelled for four years on the Continent to fit himself for a diplomatic career; he was appointed Commissioner of Appeal on Excise, Under-Secretary of State, secretary to the Viceroy of Ireland, and finally Secretary of State (1717), though his health was then failing, and he never did himself justice in this office. He retired after a tenure of office of eleven months, and died in 1719.

There is no doubt that Addison's contributions to *The Spectator* are his chief title to fame, as well as the chief cause of the periodical's unprecedented success. The best-drawn character in the Spectator Club is undoubtedly Sir Roger de Coverley, whom he killed, some say, lest the coarser hand of Steele should rub any of the bloom off his creation; but Will Honeycomb is almost as well drawn, and there are admirable sketches of other characters. The graver papers, published on Saturdays to induce in readers a suitable frame of mind for Sundays, are admirably done; the critical essays, once considered excellent, are scarcely up to the standard of the others, and were in some cases not specially written for *The Spectator*, but were resuscitated from Addison's literary lumber-room.

Addison's essays are charming and delightful in themselves, and are of great importance for the influence

which they had, not merely upon literature but upon life and manners. Macaulay has done justice to this aspect of Addison's work when he speaks of "the great satirist, who alone knew how to use ridicule without abusing it, who, without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, and who reconciled wit and virtue, after a long and disastrous separation, during which wit had been led astray by profligacy, and virtue by fanaticism". Addison was a master of humour, but he indulged in no personalities, and his wit wounded no one. As Johnson says, "his prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling". Johnson concludes his eulogy with the well-known words, "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison".

Our greatest prose satirist and one of the most interesting and tragic figures in our literary history is Jonathan Swift (1667–1745). He belonged to a Yorkshire family, but was born in Dublin, and educated at Kilkenny and Trinity College, Dublin. He became secretary to the statesman and essayist Sir William Temple, but was afterwards ordained and presented to three small livings in Ireland. He became the leading writer of pamphlets to the Tory party, and for a time practically dictated the government's policy. His services were rewarded by his appointment to the deanery of St. Patrick's in Dublin. The death of Queen Anne ended his political activities in England, but he flung himself heart and soul into Irish affairs, and by his famous *Drapier's Letters* aroused in Ireland the dormant spirit of nationality. Swift was always morbid and misanthropic, and became more so as the years went on, especially after the death of Esther Johnson ("Stella"), the woman he had loved. In his

old age he became quite insane, and for three years lived in a state of idiocy. He bequeathed the bulk of his fortune to found a hospital for lunatics.

The life and character of Swift are perhaps more interesting than those of any other English man of letters. Great as are many of his writings, all of which bear the stamp of his unique personality, we feel that they are not so great as the man himself. It is possible to mention here only Swift's principal works and a few of his innumerable pamphlets. He was a titanic pamphleteer; but although all his writings show ability of the highest kind, many are lacking in interest save to students of the details of early eighteenth-century history and politics. Such writings were not intended for posterity; Swift was, in fact, the earliest and greatest of journalists, the prince of leader-writers. That many of these pamphlets are still read is due entirely to Swift's unique gifts of style and irony. *A Tale of a Tub* is one of the best and most characteristic of Swift's writings. It is a brilliant satire on Roman Catholics and Calvinists; nor does it entirely spare Swift's own Church. Many other subjects are satirized besides the Churches; critics and bad writers come in for their share of sarcasm. *The Battle of the Books* is a slighter piece, but its considerable merits are not lessened by the fact that Swift was on the wrong side. *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) is by far the most famous of all Swift's works, and is one of the greatest books in the English language. Its charm lies to a large extent in its air of artless authenticity. Many modern editions are lavishly and beautifully illustrated, but it should not be forgotten that such illustrations are totally at variance with the spirit of the book, and that the original editions were austerely adorned by nothing save a portrait of Captain Gulliver, four maps, and two diagrams. The satire becomes more

scathing and more universal towards the end, the last book being the most powerful indictment of humanity ever penned. *Gulliver's Travels* is one of the most original of books. Dr. Johnson's criticism upon it that "when once you have thought of big men and little men, it is very easy to do all the rest" is one of the worst utterances of that great critic, who was ever more at home with talent than with genius. *Gulliver's Travels* has the power of attracting readers of all kinds. Children love it as the liveliest and most realistic of fairy-tales; men appreciate its keen and all-embracing satire; for historians it throws much light on the reign of George I; men of letters appreciate its consummate art and its cunning use of the plain style.

A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation (published 1738, but written earlier) is a delightful and, for Swift, good-natured satire upon the banalities and *clichés* of polite conversation. It is written in dialogue; five men and three ladies take part in this contest in trite repartees. It was so popular that it was acted in a Dublin theatre, though it was not intended for the stage, and, of course, has no plot. *Directions to Servants,* which was never finished, was published in 1745. It is a good piece of irony, and shows how keen an eye Swift had for details, especially when disagreeable. *An Argument against abolishing Christianity* is a brilliantly ironical pamphlet; *A Letter to a Young Gentleman, lately entered into Holy Orders* throws considerable light on Swift's religious opinions. *The Drapier's Letters* deal with a plan for coining copper in Ireland, a patent for doing so having been granted to William Wood, a Birmingham tradesman. The real objection to the scheme was not that it was a bad one, for copper coins were needed, nor that the patent was given to Wood by jobbery, for jobbery played a part in

most transactions in those days; the scheme was detested by the Irish mainly because they had had no say in it, and it was an outstanding example of government without the consent of the governed. Swift's bitter attack led to the abandonment of the scheme: The pamphlet usually called, for sake of convenience, *A Modest Proposal*, though too cannibalistic for some readers' tastes, is perhaps the most ironical of all ironical writings. Of his other prose works the *Journal to Stella* is the most important. It consists of letters written twice daily to Stella between September, 1710, and June, 1713. It shows that Swift had another side to his nature, and that the gloomy and formidable misanthrope could be strangely tender to Stella and to his friends.

There are three striking characteristics of Swift's writings. He was highly original, owing less than almost any great writer to his predecessors. He was indifferent to fame, publishing only one of the least of his works in his own name. His wisdom, which was great, was always practical; although so ardent a churchman, he was always one of the children of this world. As regards style, his writing is wellnigh perfect. It is clear, precise, and exact, and absolutely free from rhetorical devices. As he intended, it can be understood by all who can read print.

Joseph Butler (1692–1752), Bishop of Durham, is still remembered on account of one book, his *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature.* This book was directed against the deists, and is the only work of permanent interest evolved by the once-famous deistic controversy. Its arguments are well arranged, but its style is dry and tough.

Among philosophers of the early eighteenth century, a leading place belongs to **George Berkeley** (1685–

1753), Bishop of Cloyne, a brilliant graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. His chief works are: *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*; *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, in which his philosophical theory is fully set forth; *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*; *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher*; and *Theory of Vision, vindicated and explained*. Berkeley was admirable as a writer; as a man he was said by his friend Pope to be possessed of "every virtue under heaven"; no contemporary and few writers of any period have to the same extent won "golden opinions from all sorts of people". Berkeley's style is full of a subtle and all-pervading charm; it is both clear and elegant, and may perhaps rank as the best argumentative style in English. He can handle his abstruse subjects so as to attract readers who are not philosophically minded, and can do this without that loss of depth which is apt to characterize popular expositions of unpopular themes. His style is seen at its best in his dialogues *Hylas and Philonous* and *Alciphron*; its polished dignity makes it not unworthy to be compared with that of Plato. Among philosophers there is none who presents fewer vulnerable points than Berkeley.

Eminent alike as historian and philosopher, though his work in the latter capacity has proved more permanent, was **David Hume** (1711–1776), the son of a Berwickshire laird. His *Philosophical Essays concerning the Human Understanding*, a recasting of an earlier book, appeared in 1748. In 1751 he published his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* and in 1752 his *Political Discourses*, which were well received. His *History of England* appeared between 1754 and 1761. In spite of adverse criticism, it was immediately recognized as a standard work. Hume is not a trustworthy historian; he had not access to many documents, nor

did he make full use of those to which he had access. Yet his *History* was a work of prime importance, since it was the first English historical work that was thoroughly readable. Its style is clear and pleasing, its narrative is forceful and dramatic. It would be well if some later and more "scientific" historians who condemn Hume's matter had borrowed from him something of his manner. His *History* was read with nearly as much enjoyment as the novels of Fielding and Richardson. His contribution to philosophy was more solid and lasting. He continued the line of thought begun by Locke and Berkeley; his acute criticism of their conceptions compelled philosophy either to come to a dead halt, or to find, as Kant did, a new and profounder view of the nature of human reason. He was one of the most influential thinkers of his age, and in many respects is more typical than anyone else of the thought of the middle of the eighteenth century.

The greatest of all British historians is **Edward Gibbon** (1737–1794), who owed little of his ability to the University of Oxford, where he spent fourteen months, but much to the five years which he spent abroad, to his experiences as captain of militia and member of parliament, and to his great industry. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was published in six volumes between 1776 and 1788. It is undoubtedly the greatest historical work in our language; indeed it may be argued that the world does not contain another history so grandly planned and so ably executed. There are in it some faults of detail; it would be strange if more than a hundred and fifty years' rummaging in the dust-heaps of antiquity had not elicited many new facts of importance. But these flaws are trifling; Gibbon, unlike Hume and others, has not been superseded, nor is he ever likely to be. It is noteworthy that several

eminent historians have been content with editing Gibbon, fully realizing the vanity of re-doing his work. He is at once graphic and accurate; he had the gift of getting what was essential from his sources, and of correctly assessing their value. His wide learning puts to shame the narrow specialism of a later date; his broad, sweeping narrative has the grandeur of the events which it relates. His insight into human nature in every variety of circumstances is that of a great and philosophical historian. His life was an ideal one for an historian; he was always in easy circumstances, and never had to work for a livelihood; he never was one of the "monks of Oxford", but lived as a man of the world; his military and parliamentary experiences gave him insight into strategy and legislation; and he had an ideal retreat at Lausanne. His health was good, and his industry almost incredible. His *Autobiography* is not only one of the most entertaining but also one of the most candid books of its kind in English; his *Letters* are most admirable; but it is, of course, to the *Decline and Fall* that he owes his immortality, and immortality is not easily won by an historian. He would not have won it had he not also been a consummate man of letters. His grand Ciceronian style has been condemned as monotonous, but it is admirably suited to its subject, and has a charm of its own. We may say of Gibbon what Tennyson said of Virgil, that his "ocean-roll of rhythm sounds for ever of Imperial Rome".

The best-known literary figure of the eighteenth century—indeed, probably the best-known figure in all our literary history—is Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784). His fame is due in no small measure to the genius of James Boswell, who wrote his *Life*, a book which is beyond question the best biography in English, and one of the half-dozen best books of its

century. Johnson, the son of a bookseller, was born at Lichfield, and educated at Pembroke College, Oxford. He married a widow who was more than twenty years his senior, and, after an unsuccessful attempt to start a school, went to London with three acts of a tragedy, *Irene*, in his pocket, determined to earn a living with his pen. He began by writing reports of the debates in Parliament, always taking care that "the Whig dogs should not have the best of it". In 1744 he published his *Life of Richard Savage*, a poet and outcast from society, who claimed to be an earl's son, and whom Johnson had known intimately. In 1747 he issued the plan of his famous *Dictionary*, and began work upon it in the same year. He used an interleaved copy of Bailey's *Dictionary*, and employed six amanuenses. In 1750 he commenced to publish *The Rambler*, a paper modelled upon *The Spectator*. It appeared twice weekly for two years. Although it contains plenty of sound sense, it is little read nowadays; it is over-weighted with moralizing, and its style is ponderous. In 1752 Johnson suffered a heavy blow in the loss of his wife. He completed and published his *Dictionary* in 1755, and on 7th February of that year wrote his famous letter to the Earl of Chesterfield, in which he rejected the earl's belated overtures towards becoming the patron of the book. The *Dictionary* was at once recognized as the best in the language; its definitions are singularly clear and well-expressed; its quotations are apt and well-chosen. *The Idler* began to appear in 1758, and continued for two years. The papers in it are shorter than those in *The Rambler*, and somewhat less heavy-handed. His story *Rasselas* was written in less than a week to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral; it was the most popular of his works, and was translated into nine languages. In 1762 Johnson received a government

pension of £300 a year, and so became less dependent on literary toil. His edition of Shakespeare, distinguished by its majestic common sense, appeared in 1765. In 1777 Johnson began to write what was his masterpiece—*The Lives of the Poets* (published 1779–81). It is true that, as Mrs. Browning said, he left the poets out; many of those men whose biographies he wrote are unknown to-day even to professional scholars; and his treatment of some of the great men that he included—notably of Milton and of Gray—is not satisfactory. With all its faults, however, *The Lives of the Poets* remains one of the best books of criticism in English. It is transparently honest, and is full of common sense and its author's immense knowledge of life. Moreover, frequent indulgence in conversation tended to make Johnson's style less heavy and slightly more colloquial. In 1773 Johnson had accompanied Boswell on a tour in Scotland, and had published *A Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland* two years later. His health began to decline and he died on 13th December, 1784, being buried in Westminster Abbey a week later.

Though Johnson is such a prominent literary figure, his books are seldom read. *Irene* is forgotten, *Rasselas* is considered ponderous; even *The Lives of the Poets* is not appreciated to the full. The great *Dictionary*, a pioneer work in its day, has long been superseded. Johnson is a unique example of a man who has been dissociated from his books. He is remembered chiefly as a conversationalist, and on account of Boswell's immortal biography.

Johnson was a most formidable man to encounter, but he was loved and respected as few other men have been. Underneath his gruff exterior he had a heart as tender as that of any woman. Many of his peculiarities are to be attributed to the state of his health. He was

always scrofulous — Queen Anne had touched him in vain for the King's Evil — and he inherited a melancholic disposition from his father. He had a morbid fear of death. He suffered from a kind of St. Vitus's dance, and had the habit of "touching" nearby objects, in order to avert the evil chance. His melancholy made him too exacting with himself, and he was continually reproaching himself with laziness. As a matter of fact, he left a considerable amount of work behind him, though it was his character rather than his work which made him famous. He was a more absolute literary dictator than any who went before him or came after him. Above all, he was the first literary man who fearlessly maintained his complete independence.

Johnson's style has often been criticized as too ponderous and too full of many-syllabled words of Latin origin; no doubt at times this criticism is true, but in his best work Johnson's sonorous style is excellent. Unfortunately it was imitated by many contemporaries and by some writers of a later generation who had not Johnson's gifts or character; in their hands it became pompous and ridiculous.

Johnson's biographer **James Boswell** (1740–1795) was the son of a Scottish judge, and followed his father's profession, becoming for a short time Recorder of Carlisle. He was thirty-one years younger than his illustrious friend, whom he met for the first time in 1763. Ten years later he visited the Hebrides with Johnson. Johnson's death in 1784 made him feel at liberty to publish his *Tour to the Hebrides* (1786), and to settle down to the composition of his greater work, which appeared, after some delays, in May, 1791. He saw a second edition through the press, but died in 1795, before he had completed his work on a third edition.

Some critics have maintained that Boswell's tran-

scendent merit as a biographer was due to his having been a fool. Such a theory is quite untenable. He was an accomplished biographer; and the merits of his book are artistic, not photographic or gramophonic merits. He was as completely master of his material as was Gibbon, and was equally unsparing of himself in the trouble which he took to handle it to the best of his ability. He revealed himself in his book almost as unsparingly as Pepys revealed himself in his *Diary*, but printed and published his revelations, while Pepys locked his away in cipher. He is, therefore, a man whom it is easy to like but difficult to respect. His book has conferred upon Johnson an immortality denied to him by his own writings; thanks to Boswell, Johnson "in his habit as he lived" is better known to us than many of our contemporaries, whose biographies have been written by less able hands.

Johnson's friend **Oliver Goldsmith** (17[illegible]) is one of the best loved of all literary men. His poems, plays, and novel are discussed elsewhere; here we shall mention his miscellaneous prose writings, and say something about his life, which provides a story far more entertaining than most novels. Goldsmith was the son of a Church of Ireland parson with a large family and a small income. He was born at Pallas, County Longford, in 1728, and was educated at various local schools and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated without distinction. He [illegible] upon entering each of the learned professions in turn. He presented himself to the Bishop of Elphin for ordination, but, as he appeared in scarlet breeches, was thought unworthy of holy orders. He borrowed £50 from his uncle in order to study law, but was robbed of it before he got farther than Dublin. He then left Ireland — for ever, as it turned out — and went to study medicine

under Alexander Monro, the first of a dynasty of that name which reigned in the chair of anatomy at Edinburgh for over a hundred and twenty years. Goldsmith remained two years in Edinburgh, and then in 1754 went to complete his studies on the Continent. A certain element of myth surrounds his adventures there. He studied at Leyden and Louvain and went on foot through France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, supporting himself by playing on the flute, or by disputing with scholars at convents or universities, like a wandering scholar of the Middle Ages. He himself said that he took the M.B. degree somewhere; when he landed in England in 1756 he was, at any rate, rich in experience. He had seen many sides of life, and was destined to see many more. He became a strolling player, an apothecary's assistant, an usher, a reader to Richardson (the printer and novelist), and a poor physician. Finally he began to do hack-work for various publishers, commencing by writing many reviews and critiques.

Goldsmith was a friend of all the most notable literary men of his day: Johnson, Burke, Gibbon, Garrick, Boswell, and Reynolds. They seem to have regarded him with affectionate toleration, as one would regard a child. Indeed, like Peter Pan, he seems to have refused to grow up. He had many amiable weaknesses: a taste for gaudy clothes, a liking for gambling, and an ambition to shine in conversation. Nature had made him an exquisite writer, but a poor talker. He was recklessly charitable when he had any money. He is said to have died £2000 in debt, and his financial troubles hastened his end. He died in 1774, having unwisely prescribed a patent medicine for himself. He was buried in the burial-ground of the Temple Church. The cenotaph in Westminster Abbey has upon it an epitaph (in Latin)

by Dr. Johnson, which contains the happiest verdict which can be given upon Goldsmith: "He touched almost every kind of writing, and touched none that he did not adorn".

Goldsmith's miscellaneous writings may be divided into two classes: those which were original and those which were compilations. He compiled histories of Greece, Rome, and England, and a work on natural history entitled *Animated Nature*, as well as writing various shorter works such as the *Life of Beau Nash*, *Memoir of Voltaire*, and *Life of Bolingbroke*. Even in these compilations he displays his beautifully easy style, his own distinct way of writing. He was not a scholar by nature, and did not wish to undertake any laborious investigations. He was always writing under pressure; and Gibbon almost persuaded him to write an account of Alexander the Great's campaign against Montezuma. In his *Animated Nature* he was sometimes "indebted to his imagination for his facts". Yet, in spite of some obvious absurdities, his compilation work is good, as he rendered attractive many subjects which often become dry in more scholarly hands.

His original works are, however, on a different plane altogether. In them he expressed his lovable personality. No one ever put so much of himself into his books as Goldsmith. His essays, especially those in *The Bee*, are admirable. *An Inquiry into the State of Polite Learning* is readable but not profound. *The Citizen of the World*, in which a Chinese describes English manners and customs, contains pieces more characteristic of Goldsmith, especially in the passages describing Beau Tibbs. These passages are as good as anything in Addison. The best of Goldsmith, however, is perhaps to be found in his two plays and his one novel, which will be mentioned later.

Another brilliant Irishman and intimate friend of Dr. Johnson was **Edmund Burke** (1729–1797), one of the greatest statesmen of his age. He was born in Dublin, and educated at Trinity College in that city, but went to the Middle Temple to study law, though he was never called to the Bar. He adopted literature as a means of livelihood, and in 1756 published *The Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful*, a rather commonplace work on æsthetics, which, however, broke new ground. He planned and edited *The Annual Register*, an admirable compilation which has appeared annually ever since. Burke entered Parliament in 1765, and in 1770 published his *Thoughts on the Present Discontents.* Burke was the leading advocate of a policy of peace and conciliation with America, and in several magnificent speeches he criticized the ministerial measures with regard to the Colonies. He never surpassed some of his speeches on American affairs, which are unique alike for breadth of view and eloquence of language. In 1783 he was made Paymaster-General of the Forces. Burke was mainly responsible for the impeachment of Warren Hastings; the lucidity, eloquence, and mastery of detail which he showed on this occasion were great, but sometimes he was too picturesque in his language and too bitter against Hastings. The chief feature in the latter part of Burke's life was his resolute struggle against the ideas and doctrines of the French Revolution. His famous *Reflections on the French Revolution*, a pamphlet which appeared in 1790, had an unprecedented sale, and gave enormous impetus to the reaction which had commenced in England. From this time most of his writings are powerful if somewhat unbalanced pleadings on the same side. The French Revolution became, in fact, his monomania, and evoked his most serious out-

bursts of exaggeration and theatricalism. We may mention *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* and the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*. In 1791 Burke retired from Parliament and received a pension. He died in 1797.

Burke's career was somewhat paradoxical. He was a supremely great statesman who never held any important office. He was an unequalled orator, who, nevertheless, was nicknamed "the Dinner Bell" because he emptied the House when he rose to speak. His character has been elaborately drawn by many writers, but none of them has equalled the sketch of Burke which Goldsmith has given in *Retaliation*, to which charming little poem the reader is referred.

There are many omnivorous lovers of literature who can read every form of composition except a speech. The qualities of a good speech — exaggerated colouring, repetition, and the various tricks of rhetoric — are turned into so many vices when printed. A speech, moreover, is usually ephemeral in its appeal. Burke is the exception. He was enough of a poet to enunciate universal principles when dealing with the particular. His works are a storehouse of political wisdom of the best kind Men of every shade of political opinion can learn much from Burke, except those extremists on either side who are incapable of learning anything from anybody. His style, in spite of occasional lapses into bombast, may be regarded as on the whole the best English prose style of the eighteenth century.

Thomas Gray (1716–1771) and **William Cowper** (1731–1800), whose poetical writings have been already mentioned, deserve to be mentioned as prose-writers too, on account of their admirable letters. In Gray's *Letters*, which are infinitely various, we can read the whole story of his life and personality. Were it not for

them we should not know for certain that he possessed that gentle spirit of humour which is often complementary to a gentle spirit of melancholy. They are full of scholarship, wisdom, and wit in the best sense of the word. Cowper's *Letters* are perhaps the best in the language, being absolutely natural, graceful, and frank. He had the gift of making trivialities interesting, partly by writing in so easy and attractive a style, and partly by displaying in his writing his own engaging personality.

John Wesley (1703–1791) was a notable writer, though he has other and greater claims to distinction. He was educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford, and became a fellow of Lincoln College. At the age of thirty-five he was converted, and four years later began to preach in the open air. His labours as an itinerant preacher were incessant. He would ride from forty to sixty miles in a day. He read or wrote during his journeys, and frequently preached four or five times a day. It is believed that he preached 40,000 sermons and travelled 250,000 miles in his ministry of half a century. In spite of these almost incredible activities, he found time for much literary work, preparing grammars, a textbook of logic, and dictionaries. His chief contribution to literature, however, is his famous *Journal*, which covers the years 1735 to 1790, and which is one of the world's great books. It is plain and straightforward in its style, and throws much light not only upon the extremely attractive character of its author, but upon the social history of the eighteenth century.

Among writers of journals and letters many would give first place to **Horace Walpole** (1717–1797), who towards the end of his long life succeeded his nephew as fourth Earl of Orford. He was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, was a friend of the poet Gray, and, thanks to his father, Sir Robert Walpole,

held several sinecures which enabled him to live comfortably and freely indulge his literary and antiquarian tastes. At Strawberry Hill, near London, he erected a Gothic villa, laid out the grounds with minute ingenuity, and made it a principal business of his life to adorn and furnish it with objects of curiosity and antiquarian interest. He also set up a private printing-press there, at which he printed many of his own works. His fame as a writer, however, rests on his *Letters*, which number over three thousand, and which are held to be unsurpassed in the English language. They are highly interesting and valuable as a storehouse of the more evanescent traits of contemporary history.

Another accomplished letter-writer is **Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield** (1694–1773). He was famous in his day not only as a brilliant statesman, but as the *beau ideal* of a fine gentleman. His political and journalistic writings are now quite forgotten, and he is remembered in literary history as the author of two series of letters, the *Letters to his Son* and the *Letters to his Godson.* Neither series was intended to be seen by any eye save that of the recipient. The earlier and more famous series was sold to a publisher by Chesterfield's son's widow the year after Chesterfield died, and the other series was not published until 1890, when Chesterfield had been dead for a hundred and seventeen years. Both series are admirably written, and inculcate a worldly system of conduct which is by no means bad or selfish. They may always be read with pleasure for their style, for the light they throw on the times, and for their worldliness, which is an agreeable antidote to too much other-worldliness. It should never be forgotten that they were not written for publication. That fact lessens their resemblance to a Book of Etiquette.

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CHAPTER VI

DRAMA FROM 1660 TO THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Restoration drama differs in one important respect from Elizabethan drama. It catered especially for the king and court and the small circle of aristocrats who were known as men about town. It is, therefore, not popular drama, but the drama of a clique; an important clique, no doubt, and extremely important in its own eyes, but no more entitled to be regarded as the people of England than were the famous three tailors of Tooley Street, who presented a petition to Parliament in its name.

Soon after the opening of the theatres **John Dryden** (1631–1700) turned his attention to the composition of plays as an easy way of earning money with his pen. He wrote altogether some twenty-seven pieces between the years 1663 and 1694. He was far too competent a writer not to put plenty of good work into these plays, but he was never quite at his best as a playwright, and has left scarcely any plays which are entirely satisfactory. *The Rival Ladies* was fairly successful; *The Indian Queen* and its sequel *The Indian Emperor* were notable chiefly for the magnificence of their mounting. Dryden attempted dramatic work of another kind when he wrote his heroic plays in obedience to a passing fashion. *Tyrannic Love* appeared in 1669, and the two parts of the famous *Conquest of Granada* in 1669 and 1670. *Aurungzebe*, Dryden's masterpiece in this kind, appeared in 1675, thirty-two years before the death of its hero. *All for Love*, a retelling of the story of *Antony and Cleo-*

patra, is easily Dryden's best play, and the only one which he wrote to please himself. It is a much less exuberant play than Shakespeare's, but it is well constructed, and compares favourably with many if not most non-Shakespearean tragedies. After being deprived of the Laureateship, Dryden resumed his career as a dramatist, though not with his former success. *Don Sebastian*, an excellent play, and *Amphitryon* were both produced in 1690; his last play, *Love Triumphant*, appeared in 1694.

In his short life Thomas Otway (1652–1685) wrote several comedies and tragedies, but his fame is kept alive entirely by two of the latter. *The Orphan*, a most pathetic blank-verse play, is admirable of its kind, and would probably have been revived were it not rendered unsuitable for the modern stage by its sordid plot. It is a domestic, not an heroic play; its heroine, Monimia, was at one time as well known as any Shakespearean heroine. Otway's masterpiece, however, was *Venice Preserved*. This is easily the greatest of Restoration tragedies, in spite of its witless comic scenes which satirize the first Earl of Shaftesbury under the name of Antonio. This play puts its author on terms of temporary equality, not indeed with Shakespeare, as has been foolishly claimed, but with Ford and Massinger Otway's stagecraft was good, but he was more dramatist than poet, and his verse is often weak His own experiences as an actor and his unrequited affection for Mrs. Barry, the principal actress in his plays, probably improved the quality of his tragedies *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved* tower high above the bombast and the banalities of the Restoration stage

Restoration comedy, however, in spite of some disagreeable qualities, is much more entertaining than Restoration tragedy Sir George Etherege (1635–

1691), a scamp of some charm, whom his friends called "gentle George" or "easy Etherege", wrote three comedies before he was killed by falling downstairs in a drunken fit. The best of them is *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter*, which owed some of its contemporary fame to the fact that, under a thin disguise, it represented well-known men about town, including the author, on the stage. His comedies display his gifts of ease, naturalness, and brilliance, but are not far removed from being mere farces. Construction was not his forte, but he could paint the fashionable world in a skilful manner.

A much more accomplished writer of comedies was **William Wycherley** (1640–1716), the son of a Shropshire squire, who was educated in France, in order to avoid the Puritan influences which dominated English education during his youth, and at Queen's College, Oxford. There is some doubt as to when he wrote the four comedies to which he owes his fame. He told Pope that he wrote *Love in a Wood* when he was but nineteen, *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* at twenty-one, *The Plain Dealer* at twenty-five, and *The Country Wife* at one- or two-and-thirty. It is almost certain that he antedated the composition of all these plays in order to boast of his own precocity; but it is quite certain that they were all written when he was comparatively young, and that in the last forty years of his life he wrote nothing of any account. As is natural, *Love in a Wood*, the earliest of the four plays, is the least mature, but it is a sufficiently lively and witty comedy. *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* was a better, though a less successful play. It borrowed its central incident from a minor play by the Spanish dramatist Calderon. *The Country Wife* is a splendid comedy, marred only by the coarseness which is inseparable from its plot. Almost a century

later, Garrick produced an innocuous version of it known as *The Country Girl*, but he merely made it insipid. It owes a slight debt to Molière. *The Plain Dealer*, based on Molière's *Le Misanthrope*, is its author's masterpiece. As Voltaire said, "All Wycherley's strokes are stronger and bolder than those of our *Misanthrope*, but then they are less delicate, and the rules of decorum are not so well observed in this play". Manly is a vigorously-drawn character, and Fidelia, who faintly resembles Viola in *Twelfth Night*, is not without a certain pathos. Amongst the fine gentlemen who wrote comedies of repartee in the last thirty years of the seventeenth century, the second place belongs undoubtedly to Wycherley.

As undoubtedly, the first place belongs to **William Congreve** (1670–1729). It is customary to speak of him as if he was Wycherley's contemporary; actually he was thirty years younger, and his plays were produced in the reign of William of Orange. Congreve belonged to an old Staffordshire family, but was educated in Ireland, at Kilkenny School and at Trinity College, Dublin. At both these seats of learning Swift, who was his senior by two years, was his companion and friend. After leaving Dublin, Congreve entered the Middle Temple, but at a very early age adopted a career of elegance and literature. His first play, *The Old Bachelor*, was brought out in 1693. Congreve was then only twenty-three years of age, and, according to his own account, had written the play four years previously, when recovering from an illness. It is a remarkable first play, and a remarkable piece of work for so young an author, but its plot is poor, and it imitates Jonson at times with no great competence. It was highly successful, and its reception encouraged Congreve to write *The Double-Dealer*, which first appeared in the autumn

of the same year. It is a better play than its predecessor, but was less well received. Maskwell and Lady Touchwood are indeed somewhat out of place in a comedy; the former is the conventional stage villain, complete with all his appurtenances, including asides and soliloquies. The patronage of the queen and Dryden's generous praises saved this comedy from failure, and after a time, when audiences had got used to the novelties of Congreve's methods, it became fairly popular. Congreve's next play, *Love for Love*, appeared in 1695 at the new theatre in Portugal Row, Lincoln's Inn Fields. It marks a still further advance, and is in many respects Congreve's masterpiece. The characters are more natural and more interesting than those of the other comedies; the plot is better, and the dialogue more sparkling than ever. The play was a brilliant success, and won for Congreve a share in the theatre, though he did not carry out his promise of writing a play every year. His next play was his tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, which was immoderately praised when it appeared and during the eighteenth century; it is now, perhaps, undervalued. It is a play of gloom and fustian, and though it ranks below the work of the lesser Elizabethans, it stands near Otway's two best plays among the best half-dozen of post-Restoration tragedies. Tragedy, however, was not Congreve's forte; that he wrote so passable a one must be considered as a tribute to his craftsmanship rather than to his natural gifts. A passage in *The Mourning Bride* has suffered from Dr. Johnson's extravagant eulogy; it is a piece of good rhetoric, not poetry. Congreve's last play, *The Way of the World*, was produced in 1700. It was written to please the author rather than the public. He put his best work into it, but it was a comparative failure, and he vowed to write no more for the stage, and scrupulously kept

his vow. Many critics consider this play Congreve's best work and the best comedy of repartee in English, but it is marred by its imperfect plot and its somewhat inhuman atmosphere. The coquette Millamant, however, is easily the most life-like figure in Congreve's gallery; a woman of flesh and blood, unlike most of his two-dimensional puppets. Congreve lived twenty-nine years longer, but, practically speaking, wrote no more. He enjoyed various sinecures, and was so well liked that, even in those days of acrimonious party strife, he was permitted to enjoy them irrespective of the vicissitudes of his party. He was considered as the leading English man of letters, and Pope did him the signal honour of dedicating his translation of the *Iliad* to him.

Congreve's chief strength lies almost entirely in his dialogue. It is beautifully polished and dazzling; its one weakness is that even his fools are masters of brilliant repartee. As a writer of good English, Congreve has few equals. Meredith says of him: "Where Congreve excels all his English rivals is in his literary force, and a succinctness of style peculiar to him. He had correct judgment, a correct ear, readiness of illustration within a narrow range, in snapshots of the obvious at the obvious, and copious language. He hits the mean of a fine style and a natural in dialogue. He is at once precise and voluble. If you have ever thought upon style you will acknowledge it to be a signal accomplishment. In this he is a classic, and is worthy of treading a measure with Molière." From the purely dramatic point of view, Congreve's comedies do not rank so high. His plots are at once elaborate and careless, his characters are not interesting, and there is something of an inhuman air about them. As a master of the comic spirit, Congreve is not to be compared with Molière, but his good qualities in other respects invite the comparison.

In the year 1698 **Jeremy Collier** (1650–1726) wrote a pamphlet which was not without effect upon contemporary drama. Its title was *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*. Collier, a graduate of Caius College, Cambridge, was an ardent High-Churchman, Jacobite, and Tory, and was, of course, a non-juror, always regarding William of Orange as a usurper. Two years before the publication of his pamphlet, he was outlawed for life for giving absolution to two would-be regicides. His small book kindled a great controversy; and a pamphlet-war, one of the most severe in our literary history, broke out. Collier was a formidable controversialist, though a bad critic; he laid about him stoutly with his crab-tree cudgel, and broke in pieces the rapiers of such men as Congreve and Vanbrugh. Congreve's reply to him was not happy, and much less witty than might have been anticipated. The importance and interest of Collier's pamphlets have been overestimated. He was no literary critic; he paraded his learning like a pedant; and he had no sense of proportion. Attempted regicide was a venial offence in his eyes; a stage oath or two or any oblique references to the Scriptures in a play were blasphemies against the Holy Spirit. He thought it unseemly that any ministers of religion, even flamens and mollahs, should be brought on the stage. There is no doubt his cause was good; the stage was in urgent need of purification; but he handled his case badly, and it is absurd to call his pamphlet, as is commonly done, "a noble protest". It is no less absurd to call it "a marvellous success", as is also commonly done; the dramatists did not manage their counter-attack well, and had the worst of the controversy; but they did not mend their ways through deference to Collier's opinions. A change, mainly in the direction of dullness and incompetence, was beginning in English

drama; but it owed its origin to the uprising of a new generation and the growth of a new spirit far more than to Collier's fulminations. His pamphlet no doubt owed much of its fame to the fact that he was not a Puritan or Dissenter (the traditional enemies of the stage), but a non-juror and martyr for the "high flying cause".

One of Collier's victims and opponents was **Sir John Vanbrugh** (1664–1726), who was trained as an architect before getting a commission in the infantry. His earliest play, *The Relapse*, was produced in 1696. It was a sequel to a play by Cibber, but at once surpassed its forerunner in popularity. Lord Foppington was a famous character; scarcely less so were Miss Hoyden and her father, Sir Tunbelly Clumsey. The play was frequently acted, and was recast by Sheridan as *A Trip to Scarborough*. *Æsop*, a dramatic sermon, was a failure because the sermonizing element outweighed the dramatic. *The Provoked Wife* is perhaps Vanbrugh's masterpiece, and certainly contains his greatest character, Sir John Brute. Vanbrugh's next plays were all adaptations: *A Country House* and *The Confederacy* from Dancourt, *Squire Trelooby* and *The Mistake* from Molière. All these are excellently done, and are not mere journey-work; in many details they improve upon their originals. *The Confederacy*, in particular, is an admirable play; it follows its French original closely, and yet is English and Vanbrughian through and through. Vanbrugh also adapted a play of Beaumont and Fletcher's, and a play by Le Sage. His last play, *A Journey to London*, was left incomplete at his death, but was completed and produced by Cibber as *The Provoked Husband*. Vanbrugh's fragment is delightfully vivacious; Cibber's continuation is comparatively commonplace. Vanbrugh became Comptroller of the Royal Works and Claren-

ceux King-at-Arms, and was the architect of Blenheim Palace and other important buildings. As an architect he seems to have suffered from a kind of megalomania. He was much more successful as a dramatist. He was not a literary man or a stylist; but his active career as man of affairs, soldier, herald, architect, and playwright gave his work in the last-named capacity an inimitable breadth and liveliness.

The brilliant and likeable **George Farquhar** (1678–1707) was a native of Londonderry and was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, but was sent down for making an ill-timed joke during a divinity lecture. He became an actor, but left the stage after accidentally injuring a fellow-actor; he, rather characteristically, forgot to gird on a property-sword when playing in Dryden's *Indian Emperor*, and fought with his own genuine weapon. He produced his first comedy, *Love and a Bottle*, in 1698. It is a lively and amusing comedy, though immature, and was well received. *The Constant Couple* was also successful, as was its less attractive sequel, *Sir Harry Wildair*. Farquhar also wrote *The Inconstant*, an adaptation of Fletcher's *Wild-Goose Chase*; *The Twin Rivals*, a lively play which was a comparative failure; and *The Stage Coach*, a not very memorable one-act farce. His two best plays are *The Recruiting Officer* and his masterpiece *The Beaux' Stratagem*, written when he knew that death was fast approaching. Both plays were extremely popular, and the latter has given two proverbial characters, Boniface and Lady Bountiful, to English literature. Farquhar was in dire poverty most of his life; he had a commission in the army for a while, but sold it owing to some false hopes of promotion held out by the Duke of Ormond. He increased his embarrassments by marrying a penniless woman who had fallen in love with his appearance and

pretended to be an heiress. Although he lived and died in great distress, his gaiety never flagged; and *The Beaux' Stratagem* is one of the most mirthful comedies of the time.

Farquhar was a good playwright, but an indifferent literary man. His comedies are all good acting comedies. He had been an actor himself, and so was much more closely in touch with the stage than the aristocratic Congreve. He stands above his contemporaries by reason of his realism. He did not go to other dramatists for his characters, but went straight to life. He " kept his eye on the object ". Indeed, in several cases his plays seem to have been in part autobiographical. His plots, especially the later ones, are well constructed. His characters are most of them genial rogues, and while he is not a model of propriety, his morality compares very favourably with the cynical indecency of his contemporaries. His genius was ripening rapidly when he died; had he lived even to middle age he might well have written true comedies of the best kind. The influence of his comedies upon Fielding, and therefore upon the rise and development of the English novel, was great, as he introduced a return to real models, and avoided artificiality. His army experiences gave him something of the insight into life which Fielding acquired as a London magistrate. As a writer he was humane, gay, and good-natured; his comedies are neither heartless nor sentimental.

Sir Richard Steele (1672–1729) and **Joseph Addison** (1672–1719) both contributed to the drama, though their essays have eclipsed their plays in fame. Steele's plays include *The Funeral*, *The Lying Lover*, *The Tender Husband*, and *The Conscious Lovers* The theatre was not Steele's medium, and though his plays follow the spirit of the age, as voiced by Collier, in

being more virtuous and sentimental than the comedies of Congreve and Vanbrugh, they can only be accounted qualified successes. Some of his characters, nevertheless, gave hints to Goldsmith and Sheridan. Addison's plays include an unsuccessful comedy, *The Drummer*, produced anonymously, and *Cato*, a famous tragedy in its day. *Cato* is a well-written but unimpassioned tragedy on classical lines, and does not appeal to modern taste. Its success at the time was very great; but this was largely due to the political situation in 1713. It has many references to Liberty; every reference was greeted with cheers from the Whigs and counter-cheers from the Tories, each party being, in its own estimation, the sole guardian of Liberty. It ran for twenty nights — a long run in those days — and was translated into French, Italian, German, and Latin. A few tags from it still survive in popular quotation and misquotation.

The greatest of eighteenth-century novelists, **Henry Fielding** (1707–1754), began his literary career by writing a large number of farces, comedies, and burlesques. This work he frankly regarded as hack-work, and while almost all his plays have good passages in them, none are of great importance in comparison with his novels. His first comedy was *Love in Several Masques*; this was followed by *Tom Thumb*, one of his most successful burlesques; in its revised version, which was known as *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, this play attained a much longer life than is often reached by a burlesque, and it is still amusing. *Pasquin* and *The Historical Register of the Year 1736* were two most successful burlesques, which turned the ministry into ridicule. So popular were these pieces that the ministry hastened to pass a Licensing Act which effectually muzzled Fielding and virtually ended his career as dramatist.

In the year 1728 John Gay (1685–1732) took London and the provinces by storm with his opera *The Beggar's Opera*. It was written in accordance with a suggestion of Swift's that Gay should write a Newgate Pastoral. Its success was extraordinary. It was acted sixty-three times in London, and many times in all the principal towns of the three kingdoms. Its songs were inscribed on the backs of fans; its scenes were painted upon drawing-room screens. The actress who played the part of Polly became Duchess of Bolton; her life was written and pamphlets were made of her sayings and jests. It drove Italian opera into the background. Its success is hard to explain, though probably due in part to its novelty, its charming music, and the political interpretation given to certain episodes. Its "book" is, in point of fact, somewhat thin. Its success encouraged Gay to write a sequel, *Polly*, which was, however, banned by the Lord Chamberlain, who feared political allusions. This banning caused a considerable sensation; the libretto was published and its sale was pushed by the opposition, so that it made a small fortune for Gay. *The Beggar's Opera* has been compared with the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, which were written between 1871 and 1896; but the resemblance is not close, as Sullivan composed his music to fit Gilbert's words, while Gay wrote his lyrics to be sung to traditional airs.

George Lillo (1693–1739), the son of a Dutch jeweller and his English wife, produced his famous tragedy *The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell* at Drury Lane in 1731. It is written in prose, which occasionally lapses into unintentional blank-verse. Its success was instantaneous and lasting; for many years it was acted on public holidays, as its morality was supposed to be beneficial to apprentices. *Fatal Curio-*

sity, the story of which is founded upon that of a murder which was committed in Cornwall in the early seventeenth century, is Lillo's best play, and still has the power of arousing pity and terror. Lillo was appreciated by Fielding on account of his realism; his influence was great and extended to the Continent; but his plays scarcely rank as literature.

Richard Cumberland (1732–1811), a grandson of Richard Bentley, the greatest of English classical scholars, wrote over fifty plays, only two or three of which are noteworthy — *The Brothers*, *The West Indian*, and *The Fashionable Lover*. His comedies are of the sentimental variety, and were ridiculed by Goldsmith; Cumberland himself was brought on to the stage by Sheridan in *The Critic*, and given the name, not wholly undeserved, of Sir Fretful Plagiary.

The history of eighteenth-century drama concludes with the names of two brilliant Irishmen — **Oliver Goldsmith** (1728–1774) and **Richard Brinsley Sheridan** (1751–1816). Of Goldsmith's two plays *She Stoops to Conquer* is a good deal better than *The Good-Natured Man*. The latter is a good comedy of manners, modelled upon Goldsmith's compatriot Farquhar; it has two well-drawn characters, Croaker and Lofty, but is not entirely successful. *She Stoops to Conquer* is a splendid comedy of intrigue, introducing lively and farcical incidents and highly-drawn pictures of eccentric characters. The central incident, the mistaking of a house for an inn, is based upon a misadventure of the author's youth. This comedy still holds the stage, and is as amusing to-day as when it was first produced. It did much to kill the taste for sentimental or genteel comedies, such as those of Cumberland.

Sheridan was much more a man of the theatre than Goldsmith. He came of a talented family; his grand-

father was an intimate friend of Swift's, and his father (at intervals) a friend of Dr. Johnson's. His mother was an accomplished novelist and dramatist; one of her plays, *The Discovery*, was a stock-piece at Drury Lane for many years. Sheridan was educated at Harrow, and before he was twenty-one made a stir by eloping with the beautiful Elizabeth Linley, who, though only sixteen years of age, had made a name for herself as a *prima donna*. He also fought two duels of a savagely unconventional kind with a hated rival. He was a well-known young man of twenty-three when his first comedy, *The Rivals*, was produced at Covent Garden Theatre.

The Rivals was not a success at first, for several reasons. It was at least an hour too long; the actors, especially Shuter as Sir Anthony Absolute, did not know their parts; Sir Lucius O'Trigger was badly played by the old-fashioned actor John Lee, and was misinterpreted by certain Irish hot-heads into an aspersion on the whole Irish nation; and the sub-plot was too prominent. The play was carefully revised, however, and was reproduced eleven days after its first performance, with Lawrence Clinch in the part of Sir Lucius. It became immensely popular, and at once took its place as a classic. It has been said that its characters are stock characters or caricatures or both; but its dialogue is brilliant and its plot is skilfully worked out. Mrs. Malaprop, in particular, is a highly original creation, and has added one word (malapropism) and many phrases to the English language.

Sheridan's next play was a mere dramatic trifle entitled *St. Patrick's Day*, which was written for the benefit of Clinch, whose acting had contributed to the success of the revised version of *The Rivals*. *The Duenna*, a comic opera with words by Sheridan (he incorporated several of his own love poems!) and music

by his father-in-law, was a successful but not a memorable piece. Sheridan's next play, *A Trip to Scarborough*, is a recasting of Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, with some workmanlike improvements in it, but hardly ranking as an original piece of work.

Sheridan's masterpiece, *The School for Scandal*, was produced at Drury Lane in 1777. Although it has no appearance of being laboured, it cost its author much hard thought, and in despair he welded together two separate conceptions, *The Teazles* and *The Slanderers, a Pump Room Scene*. Solomon Teazle became Sir Peter Teazle, and moved in the world of society instead of in middle-class life, which was less familiar to his creator. The construction of the play is not perfect, but the dialogue is so sparkling, and the great scenes — especially the screen-scene — are so effective on the stage that they silence all adverse criticism. At the age of twenty-five, Sheridan had managed to write a classic, the best comedy of its kind in the English language.

The last of Sheridan's great plays was his burlesque *The Critic*, which was produced at Drury Lane on Sheridan's twenty-eighth birthday, as an after-piece to *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's most famous tragedy must have been an admirable foil to Sheridan's ridicule of modern writers of tragedy. As manager of Drury Lane, Sheridan had his head full of the trials and tribulations of play-producing; and he conceived the brilliant idea of poking fun at some of the dramatists and other people whom he had found difficult to handle. Cumberland and others were brought on the stage; but Sheridan's wit and genius enabled him to make his caricatures a general satire on the vanity of authors — indeed he directs his wit alike against actors, authors (including himself), critics, publicity-agents, stage-hands, and the audience. He has given us a complete picture of that

curious microcosm, the theatrical world; hence the permanence of his satire. The Sublime and the Ridiculous are not far apart; in *The Critic* Sheridan has transmuted the mock-sublime into the sublimely ridiculous. It is unsurpassed as a dramatic burlesque.

After an interval of almost twenty years Sheridan wrote *Pizarro*, which is described by its author as a tragedy, but which might more properly be called a patriotic melodrama. It is a worthless play, but its admirable cast and its jingoism made it a box-office success. It is said to have added £15,000 to the treasury of Drury Lane in its first season.

Sheridan's career as a dramatist began when he was twenty-three and for all practical purposes may be said to have ended when he was twenty-eight. He lived to the age of sixty-four, and gained a great reputation as a politician, a wit, and an orator, and a certain amount of notoriety as a spendthrift, and as the familiar friend of the Prince of Wales. His last years were embittered by his own and his family's ill-health, by debts, and by the burning down of Drury Lane Theatre.

Sheridan enjoyed a high reputation during his li[illegible]time and for many years after his death. It was [illegible] uncommon to bracket together the names of Sh[illegible]speare and Sheridan as the two chief ornaments [illegible] British stage. Then a reaction set in, and Sherid[illegible] accused of borrowing his good things from F[illegible] Molière, and the Restoration dramatists. Th[illegible] is that Sheridan was not a great creative ge[illegible] had admirable dramatic talent, he was a [illegible] craft, and above all he had a sparkling [illegible] write brilliant dialogue. Taking so[illegible] characters and stock situations of co[illegible] at least as old as Plautus), he suffuse[illegible] coruscating yet urbane wit, and [illegible]

made them his own for ever. Several generations elapsed before our stage produced a playwright whose literary and dramatic abilities could be compared with those of Sheridan.

CHAPTER VII

THE NOVEL, TO SCOTT

The first English novels, properly so called, were written in the middle of the eighteenth century; but certain romances, tales and narratives which may be regarded as forerunners of the novel were written in the seventeenth and even late in the sixteenth century. Some of them will be mentioned here before proceeding to consider the novel proper.

Sir Philip Sidney's (1554–1586) romance *Arcadia* was written for the amusement of his sister, and was not published until after his death. It is not much in accordance with modern taste, but was a book of wide popularity and great influence in its day. Its involved story, where little plots have lesser plots, "and so *ad infinitum*", is not to be endured to-day; but parts of the book are admirable, and imitations of it appeared by the score both in England and in France. **John Lyly's** (1554–1606) two stories, *Euphues* and its sequel *Euphues and his England*, are remembered more on account of their style than because of their other qualities; they are thin as regards plot, but contain a shrewd philosophy of life. The romances of **Robert Greene** (1560–1592) and **Thomas Lodge** (1558–1625) are remembered not so much on their own merits as because they supplied Shakespeare with plots. Greene's *Pan-*

dosto is the direct source of *The Winter's Tale*, and Lodge's *Rosalynde*, a charming romance which was written during a voyage to the Canaries, inspired Shakespeare to write *As You Like It*.

Of a very different nature are the three stories of **Thomas Deloney** (1543–1607), *Jack of Newbery*, dealing with the life of weavers, *The Gentle Craft*, dealing with the life of shoemakers, and *Thomas of Reading*, dealing with the life of clothiers. These tales are all of the same kind; romance and realism rub shoulders together in them. Deloney painted in an amusing style the humours of citizen life. He owed much to the old jest-books; in fact, in some of his chapters he has merely fitted some standard jokes into a framework. His novels were widely popular, in the strict sense of that word, in their day. They were for a long time neglected and forgotten, and it is not so very long since they were rediscovered Their literary value is considerable; but they are chiefly valuable for the pictures they give us — unobtainable elsewhere — of Elizabethan citizens, and of craftsmen who lived in days long before anyone, even in a nightmare, had foreseen the Industrial Revolution.

The impecunious and happy-go-lucky playwright **Thomas Dekker** (1570–1641) did not write anything remotely resembling a novel in form, but in some of his pamphlets he showed that he possessed great powers of observation and irony, two of the most useful qualities a realistic novelist can possess. His *Gull's Hornbook* is a kind of ironical book of etiquette, and is delightful reading. **Thomas Nashe** (1567–1601), who wrote several pamphlets of a similar nature, also wrote what might almost be called the earliest English picaresque novel. (A picaresque novel is one which deals with the adventures of wandering rogues and persons living by their wits; the most famous of such novels is *Gil Blas*,

which Le Sage wrote between 1715 and 1735.) Nashe's tale is entitled *The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton*, and was published in 1594. It attempted a new kind of writing, which no one again essayed until Defoe began to write. It sets forth, in the form of memoirs, the life and adventures of Jack Wilton, a page, who is present with Henry VIII at the siege of Tournai, and visits Venice, Florence, and Rome. He spends some time in London, and gives a lively description of its society. Real persons, such as Sir Thomas More, the Earl of Surrey, Erasmus, and Cornelius Agrippa are introduced. *Jack Wilton* is somewhat incoherent, but is vividly written, and shows close observation of human nature.

It is a far cry from Nashe to **John Bunyan** (1628–1688), but he too must have a place, though he himself would probably have disclaimed it, among the forerunners of English novelists. Bunyan, a self-educated man, of humble but ancient family, served as a soldier in the Parliamentary army for some time, was converted, became a Baptist at the age of twenty-five, and a regular preacher four years later. After the Restoration, he refused to promise to abstain from preaching, and spent twelve years, with one short break, in Bedford Gaol, where, however, his imprisonment was not very rigorous. During this time he wrote a dozen of his books. He was again imprisoned in 1675, when he wrote his greatest work, *The Pilgrim's Progress.* A second part followed some years later. He wrote in all some sixty works, but is remembered mainly on account of his masterpiece, though three of his other books are of great merit and some popularity. *Grace Abounding* is one of the best autobiographies in any language; *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* is a forerunner of the modern novel; and *The Holy War* is

surpassed as an allegory only by its author's greatest book. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is one of the most popular books in the world. It has passed through hundreds of editions, and has been translated into more than a hundred languages. Bunyan's charm is largely due to his style, which in its turn is due partly to his intimate knowledge of the Bible, and partly to the downrightness and sincerity of his character. The personifications in his allegories are more real than most characters in fiction. *Mr. Badman* gives a most graphic picture of a middle-class rascal in a country town, and if it did not directly influence Defoe, it at any rate prepared Defoe's readers to appreciate his work.

Daniel Defoe (1661–1731) is the next and the last of the forerunners of the novel. It may, however, be mentioned in passing that in some of the writings of Steele and Addison, especially in those numbers of *The Spectator*, which deal with Sir Roger de Coverley and his friends, may be found almost all the ingredients of the novel, with the important exception of plot. Defoe's masterly short story *The True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal* displays for the first time his powers of realism and his aptitude for reproducing photographic detail. In the midst of an almost unparalleled amount of journalistic writing, he managed to find time to write his masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). It was inspired to a slight extent by the adventures of the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk, whom Defoe had interviewed at Bristol. Its success was instantaneous, and encouraged Defoe to publish, four months later, a second part, which, like most sequels, lacks the charm of its predecessor. Defoe had a keen eye for public taste, and published in quick succession a series of tales, mostly in autobiographical form, which bore some analogy to his masterpiece, as well as tales of rogues, male and

are quite unaccountable, and that the fat and fussy little printer possessed genius of a qualified but quite remarkable kind. It has been uncharitably said of him that he was familiar with the working of the female heart because he was something of an old woman himself. His knowledge of women is certainly profound, but he attained it by patient study rather than by flashes of inspiration. To the present age he is unendurably prolix; his novels "drag their slow length along" in a way which is quite contrary to the spirit of the twentieth century; but the good qualities and the wide influence of his novels are undeniable.

Pamela was considered by its author and by most of its readers to be a very moral book, but the kind of morality which it inculcated laid itself open to be ridiculed and burlesqued. There were no fewer than sixteen skits upon *Pamela*, or imitations of it, of which by far the best was *Joseph Andrews*, by **Henry Fielding** (1707–1754). Fielding was the son of a major-general, was educated at Eton and Leyden, and had previously written many plays of a light and satirical kind. *Joseph Andrews* ran far beyond its original design of being a burlesque, and became a novel of life and manners. Some of its characters, Mrs. Slipslop, Parson Trulliber, and above all Parson Adams, are among the greatest characters in fiction. In this novel Fielding was still feeling his way, but it has an inimitable freshness and charm.

In 1743 Fielding published three volumes of *Miscellanies*, in one of which is the *History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, which ironically celebrates the deeds of an arch-rogue who had been hanged at Tyburn eighteen years previously. It is perhaps the greatest piece of sustained irony in English literature, and will always be appreciated by those

readers, fit though few, who derive pleasure from ironical writings. In 1748 Fielding was appointed Justice of the Peace for the County of Middlesex, and for the City and Liberty of Westminster, and in the next year produced his best novel, *Tom Jones*. To praise this, "the labour of some years" as he called it, is superfluous. Coleridge said that it had one of the three best plots in the world; and Byron called its author "the prose Homer of human nature". It is, indeed, a vast sort of comic prose epic. The introductory chapters to the books into which it is divided are models of good style and good sense. It stands in the forefront of all English novels; indeed many would claim for it the foremost place of all.

The third and last of Fielding's three great novels, *Amelia*, was published in 1751. It was written as a tribute to the memory of his first wife. It has a mellowness that is all its own, but is hardly as good as *Tom Jones*. Even the mind of such a man as Fielding could only yield one such harvest. *Amelia*, however, is extremely good, and would probably be rated higher were it not overshadowed by its greater predecessor. Fielding, acting on his doctor's orders, left England for Lisbon in June, 1754, and died there in the following October. His *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* gives a charming account of his last voyage, where we can see the indomitable pluck of the man who was dying but who was always courteous and considerate of others.

Fielding's novels have been used as models by many distinguished successors, but no one has beaten him at his own game, although those who have loved him most have been most successful as novelists. In many respects he stands nearest to Shakespeare among English authors, though Shakespeare was not of an age, but for all time, while Fielding was a typical English-

man of the eighteenth century. But in his breadth of view, in his kindly tolerance, and in his unfailing sympathy for human frailty he is Shakespearean. His novels have had a healthy influence on all subsequent fiction. His broad open-air humour is the surest of cures for an overdose of the gloomy treatises on economics and disease which have recently masqueraded as novels.

The second greatest novelist of the eighteenth century is **Tobias Smollett** (1721–1771), a Scottish physician whose life was embittered by the well-deserved failure of a tragedy which he wrote in his youth. Smollett served as a surgeon's mate on board a man-of-war, then practised as a physician for a time, and finally ended his days as a kind of universal provider of literature, compiling histories, issuing translations, and writing miscellaneous work of all kinds. His fame, however, rests entirely on his four novels. The first of these, *Roderick Random*, was published in 1748, and was good enough to make several critics think it was the work of Fielding. Like many first novels, it is the freshest of its author's works. It is largely, though not wholly autobiographical, and is especially excellent in its delineation of the British tar. The success of this book encouraged Smollett to write another picaresque novel, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751). Before writing it Smollett went to France in order to collect material. It is even more loosely constructed than its predecessor, it is full of asperities, personalities, and interpolations; but in spite of these disadvantages it is a great novel, and in the death scene of Commodore Trunnion its author displays his talent at its very best.

His third novel, *The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom*, appeared in 1753. It is a somewhat sordid story, but extremely powerful in places. Some of its episodes are more romantic than anything else in

Smollett, and foreshadow the Tale of Terror. The scene in the robbers' cottage in the forest (Chapter XXI) has been often imitated but never excelled.

In 1769 Smollett's health broke down completely, and he left England and settled near Leghorn, where he died in 1771. During the last year of his life he wrote the greatest of his novels, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. This is as easily Smollett's masterpiece as *Tom Jones* is Fielding's, and is in many ways the second greatest of eighteenth-century novels. Like Richardson's novels, it is written in the form of letters. In it the rough places of his nature have been made smooth, and his genius is at its best. Bramble, Mrs. Tabitha, and Lismahago are the best portraits in all his gallery. *Humphry Clinker* is a remarkable example of fresh and vigorous work produced at the close of a soured life.

It is difficult to avoid comparing Smollett with Fielding, to the disadvantage of the former. Fielding was an observer of the characters of human life, Smollett a describer of its various eccentricities. Fielding excelled, especially in his masterpiece, at constructing plots; Smollett's novels have not any plots to speak of, but owe what little unity they have to the fact that they deal with the adventures of one man. Above all, Fielding was a man of wise tolerance and sanity, while Smollett was imprudent, bitter, and unforgiving But when all is said and done, Smollett is supremely great His most noticeable feature is the prodigality of his wit. He is easier to imitate than his great contemporary, and has had many distinguished pupils, of whom the greatest is Dickens. Some of his fun is rather rough and some of his humour rather coarse, but he is a master of farcical situations. Both in style and vocabulary Smollett is more modern than Fielding; and in two respects he seems to have been a pioneer of modern literary methods.

He travelled to collect material, and he published a tale in serial form.

A writer who is usually classed as a novelist but whose single novel actually defies classification is Laurence Sterne (1713–1768), a clergyman of unclerical tastes and a great-grandson of an Archbishop of York. In 1759 he suddenly leapt into fame by publishing two volumes of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*; the book was completed in seven more volumes between that date and 1767. Not long before the appearance of the concluding volumes Sterne went for a tour on the Continent, which supplied him with material for his *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768). Soon after the appearance of this work Sterne died in his London lodgings.

To appreciate or even to define Sterne's wayward genius is difficult. He himself said: "If I thought you was able to form the least judgement or probable conjecture to yourself, of what was to come in the next page—I would tear it out of my book." He also said with much truth: "I think there is a fatality in it—I seldom go to the place I set out for." Owing either to his innate character or to his sojourn in Ireland, Sterne considered that laws were made to be broken. He vindicated the liberty of the novel and prevented it from being a mere mirror or photographic reproduction of life. The qualities of oddity and sentimentality which strike the casual reader of *Tristram Shandy* as its essentials, appear to be mere accidentals to those who know and like that remarkable book. Dr. Johnson said: "Nothing odd will do long, *Tristram Shandy* did not last." His axiom is true, but his illustration of it is unfortunate, as Sterne's book has outlived *Rasselas* and *Irene*. Sterne's sentimentality was more in accordance with the taste of his age than of ours; it was the chief defect of his

qualities. His great virtue lies in his style, which Hazlitt called "the pure essence of English conversational style", and in his characters, especially Walter Shandy, Corporal Trim, and Uncle Toby, the last of whom the same critic called "one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature". Sterne's plagiarisms from Burton and other earlier writers are justifiable, as the borrowings of genius always are; indeed when Sterne's debt to Burton was first pointed out the price of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* was doubled in the book-market, and Burton owed at least a little of his subsequent fame to his plagiarist. Sterne has always been loved by lovers of true humour; as he says himself: "I must expect to have a party against me of many hundreds, who either do not, or will not, laugh."

Dr. Johnson's tale *Rasselas* has already been mentioned. It is a moral essay rather than a story, and makes no appeal to the ordinary reader of novels For those who like Johnson and his majestic style and profound common sense, it is an admirable book, and is certainly a minor classic of the eighteenth century.

A novel which has won all hearts since it first appeared in 1766 is **Goldsmith's** (1728–1774) *The Vicar of Wakefield*. It does not call for any great expenditure of critical powers to point out the faults of this book. The plot is full of inconsistencies, and is less skilfully manipulated as the story progresses, and the book is padded with poems, tales, and a sermon. But it is a real classic, because it displays, perhaps more clearly than any other of his writings, Goldsmith's lovable nature. It appeals to the heart rather than to the mind. Dr. and Mrs. Primrose, Moses and his green spectacles, Olivia and Sophia, and the Misses Flamborough will live as long as any characters given us by Fielding, Dickens, or Thackeray. It is at once humorous and pathetic;

unlike Sterne, Goldsmith could be sentimental without being unmanly.

Our earliest woman-novelist is **Frances Burney** (1752–1840), usually known as a novelist as Fanny Burney, and as a diarist by her married name, Madame D'Arblay. Her father was Dr. Charles Burney, the well-known musician and historian of music, and an intimate friend of Dr. Johnson. He was nearly as celebrated for his social as for his musical gifts; his kindly and genial nature endeared him to everyone, and he kept open house in London, attracting all sorts and conditions of men to his house, by means of the hospitality and the first-rate musical entertainment which he provided. Miss Burney, though she had no regular education, had unusually good opportunities of observing human nature. She was slow at learning to write, but she had scarcely learnt to form her letters when she began to compose stories, farces, and epics. On her fifteenth birthday, encouraged by her step-mother, she burnt all her writings; but certain imaginary characters survived this ceremony, and began to develop in her mind. From them grew her first novel, *Evelina*, which was published in 1778, when she was twenty-five, but which had been written much earlier still. She had difficulty in finding a publisher, but when the book appeared it enjoyed a success unparalleled since the days of Richardson. It was anonymous, but it was soon known that Miss Burney was the author. She became at once a celebrity, and was warmly encouraged by Dr. Johnson himself. Her second novel, *Cecilia*, appeared in 1782. It was written with more elaboration then its predecessor, and there is little doubt that Johnson supervised the whole and occasionally added a moralizing paragraph. Its success was as great, if not as spectacular, as that of *Evelina*. In

1786 Miss Burney was appointed second keeper of the robes to Queen Charlotte. She found this a most arduous and intolerable job. Her hours were 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., with no holidays; her duties principally consisted in pinning and unpinning the queen. Her health began to suffer, and she was not allowed to resign. At last, after five years' servitude, she was permitted to retire with a small pension. Two years later she married General D'Arblay, a French refugee. Her third novel, *Camilla*, was a pecuniary though not a literary success, and enabled her to build a cottage in the country. Her last novel, *The Wanderer*, appeared in 1814, and seems to have found many purchasers but few readers.

Miss Burney is a curious example of a writer whose powers not only failed to develop but gradually waned, and whose style steadily deteriorated as it became more self-conscious. *Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* is a crude but very spontaneous and entertaining novel; it is farce rather than high comedy; its portraits are caricatures rather than likenesses; but the farce is excellent and the caricatures admirable. *Cecilia, or the Memoirs of an Heiress* is a first-rate novel, though it is heavier and more didactic in its tone, and its style is in places redolent of *Rasselas*. *Camilla, or a Picture of Youth* is only good in parts, and is marred by fine writing and Johnsonese; *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties* is quite unreadable. Miss Burney inaugurated the novel of home life; she had narrative powers of the highest kind, and a great gift for caricature. Maria Edgeworth, who was fifteen years her junior, and Jane Austen, who was her junior by twenty-three years, may be regarded as her followers in fiction.

A novelist who is seldom read to-day is **Henry Mackenzie** (1745–1831), comptroller of taxes for Scotland and author of *The Man of Feeling* This celebrated

novel appeared in 1771; it was such a success that its authorship was claimed by a clergyman of Bath, who took the trouble of transcribing the book and giving an air of authenticity to his manuscript by making erasures and insertions. *The Man of Feeling* is too tearful for modern tastes; it has all the worst features of Sterne's pathos with none of his redeeming humour. It is clumsily constructed and has no plot. Another of his novels, *The Man of the World*, has too involved a plot; *Julia de Roubigné* is more in the vein of Richardson, whose epistolary form it adopts, but it is an over-tragic tale. "The Man of Feeling" became Mackenzie's nickname, though actually he was a shrewd and hard-headed man of affairs, as different as might be from his namby-pamby hero Harley. Mackenzie's undoubted literary ability and his long life combined to give him a commanding position among Edinburgh men of letters; he linked the Edinburgh of Hume and Robertson with the Edinburgh of Scott.

Another novel which was of great importance in its day and for long afterwards is *Sandford and Merton*, by **Thomas Day** (1748–1789). Day was an amiably eccentric man of moderate fortune, who had advanced views about education, and who ran a farm on philanthropic, not commercial lines, and was killed when endeavouring to ride an unbroken colt. His novel appeared in three volumes, between 1782 and 1789. For long it was the chief English example of the educational novel. Like its author, it is a mixture of absurdity and sound sense. It had a long life, but the generations to whom Mr. Barlow was a household word have passed away.

Another educational novel of widespread fame in its day is *The Fool of Quality*, by **Henry Brooke** (1703–1783), a graduate of Dublin who became barrack-

master at Mullingar. *The Fool of Quality*, which was published between 1766 and 1770, is nominally a novel, but is so badly constructed that it scarcely deserves the name. Its good qualities are its simple style, its shrewd humour, and its universal but not impracticable philanthropy. Even its moral tirades have their attractive qualities. Its weak points are its invertebrate construction and its naïve distribution of rewards and punishments according to merit. It made a special appeal to Methodists, and was condensed by Wesley himself in 1781. Charles Kingsley wrote an enthusiastic introduction for a reprint of 1859.

A new development of the novel — the Tale of Terror — was inaugurated, half in jest and half in earnest, by **Horace Walpole** (1717–1797), who has already been mentioned as a masterly letter-writer. His Gothic romance *The Castle of Otranto* was published in 1764. This novel claimed to be translated by William Marshall, Gent., from the original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto, but Walpole's authorship was soon made known. The puerile supernaturalism of this romance makes it unreadable save as a literary curiosity, but its influence on English and foreign literature was far greater than that of many more artistic tales. It substituted invention for observation, and heralded, in a crude way, the renascence of wonder, the romantic revival, and the Waverley novels.

Walpole was followed by **Miss Clara Reeve** (1729–1807), who in the course of a long life wrote many romances, but is only remembered because of one of them, *The Old English Baron*, originally known as *The Champion of Virtue, a Gothic story* (1777) It is an attempt at blending the ancient romance and the modern novel; it is avowedly an imitation of Walpole's book,

but it does not reproduce the life of the century it sets out to represent, and its dialogue might, with slight changes, have been spoken by characters of the time of Charles II. Miss Reeve attempted to rationalize her very mild supernatural effects; the author of *The Castle of Otranto* said of *The Old English Baron* that "it is so probable that any trial for murder at the Old Bailey would make a more interesting story". She had not a vivid imagination, nor had she, like Fielding and Smollett, seen life from many angles; she had not even, like Horace Walpole, gone on the "grand tour". She was, accordingly, not qualified to write a masterpiece of the kind which she attempted. Her tale, however, is of some importance, partly because it was extremely popular, and partly because it links Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe, and marks a stage in the development of the Tale of Terror.

The foremost writer of tales of this kind was **Mrs. Radcliffe** (1764–1823). Her tales bear the same relation to the novel that melodrama bears to the legitimate drama. Scott has given an admirable summary of the Dramatis Personæ of such tales: "A dark and tyrannical count; an aged crone of a housekeeper, the depositary of many a family legend; a garrulous waiting-maid; a gay and light-hearted valet; a villain or two of all-work; and a heroine, fulfilled with all perfections, and subjected to all manner of hazards." Mrs. Radcliffe introduces all the stock stage-properties: a Gothic castle, a secret passage, a mouldering manuscript which becomes illegible when it is just going to reveal the heart of the mystery — all are there. She has, however, a real gift for describing landscapes; some of her descriptions of scenery are quite admirably done, and show her to have been more of an artist in words than most of the exponents of the Tale of Terror. Her

use of the supernatural is *not artistic; she explains* away her effects towards the end of her books. Her characters move in an unreal world, and the conclusion of each story is lame and impotent. Readers of to-day's sensational fiction will find little in her pages to arrest their attention; her chief interest lies in the fact that our ancestors found her enthralling. The names of her principal novels are: *A Sicilian Romance, The Romance of the Forest, The Mysteries of Udolpho*, her masterpiece, and *The Italian*. *The Italian* is a stronger novel in some respects than *Udolpho*, and is remarkable for its villain Schedoni, the first appearance in fact or fiction of the Byronic hero. During the last twenty years of her life Mrs. Radcliffe did nothing to increase the fame and fortune which she had won with comparative ease. Her life was so retired that even some of her admirers antedated her death by many years, while others said, without the slightest justification, that her mind had been unhinged by the horrors she had invented, and that she was in a private asylum.

An odd character who wrote an odd book was **William Beckford** (1759–1844), who was left an enormous fortune by his father, and who built a huge house, Fonthill Abbey, near Salisbury, where he lived in seclusion for twenty years. He then retired to Bath, where, with a much diminished fortune, but one amply sufficient, he lived the rest of his life in a smaller but also fantastically-designed house. He was famous as a collector of curios. His literary fame rests upon his Eastern tale, *The History of the Caliph Vathek*, which he wrote in French in three days and two nights at the age of twenty-two. A surreptitious English translation appeared in 1786; the French original was published in the following year. *Vathek* is a powerfully-written Oriental novelette, as eccentric as its author; it had neither predecessor

nor successor, but may be regarded as a kind of Eastern cousin of the Tale of Terror. The description of the hall of Eblis at the end of the book is admirably written.

One of the most famous (or infamous) of the Tales of Terror was *Ambrosio, or The Monk*, written by **Matthew Gregory Lewis** (1775–1818) before he was twenty years of age. Its appearance made a sensation, and its popularity was increased when the Attorney-General took the preliminary steps towards its suppression. The subject of the story was suggested by a paper contributed by Steele to *The Guardian*. *The Monk*, in spite of its melodramatic and somewhat revolting qualities, is a wonderful *tour de force* for a boy of nineteen. It is historically interesting as connecting the literature of Germany and England, for Lewis was a good German scholar and his tale was imitated by German romance-writers. *The Monk* is at once the most powerful and the most unpleasant of the Tales of Terror.

A younger novelist of the same kind was the Rev. **Charles Robert Maturin** (1782–1824), whose sensational fiction includes *The Fatal Revenge*, *The Wild Irish Boy*, and *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Of these *Melmoth* is by far the best; ill-constructed though it is, it is probably the best product of the "Monk" school of fiction. Maturin had no constructive powers, but had no slight mastery over the terrible and the pathetic; he had a powerful imagination, and could employ suggestion with no little skill.

Mary Shelley (1797–1851), the poet's second wife, wrote a Tale of Terror which is still occasionally read and very frequently alluded to. This is *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, which was written when she was nineteen and published when she was twenty-one. It ranks among the best of these tales. Its student-hero

Frankenstein constructed a monster from human fragments gathered in burial-grounds and dissecting-rooms, and galvanized it into life. It wrought a dreadful retribution upon its maker. The monster was nameless, but is often referred to in modern journalism by the name of its maker.

These *Tales of Terror* have for the most part little appeal for modern readers, as the art of writing thrillers has made great advances in the last hundred and fifty and particularly in the last fifty years. But the novels which have been mentioned here were all books of considerable importance in their day, and they all widened the scope of the novel by encouraging the use of the powers of imagination and suggestion.

Three women-novelists of great importance must be mentioned next, Miss Edgeworth, Miss Ferrier, and Miss Austen, who were respectively Irish, Scottish, and English by birth. **Maria Edgeworth** (1767–1849) was born in England, but her father, a well-known eccentric of his day, was Irish. At the age of fifteen she went with her father and his third wife to Edgeworthstown, County Longford, where she spent most of the remainder of her long life. Her literary career began at an early age; in most of her works her father collaborated to some extent; he interpolated passages in praise or support of his own fads, and aggravated his daughter's already excessive tendency towards pointing a moral. Her first novel was *Castle Rackrent*. It was followed by *Belinda*, *Moral Tales*, *Patronage*, *Harrington*, *Ormond*, and others. In her novels she displayed considerable powers of humour and character-drawing; her short tales are even better, as her ability to construct a plot was not so great as her other literary gifts, and this defect is less noticeable in a tale than in a novel. Her studies of Irish life and character did much to banish

the stage-Irishman from literature, and inspired Scott to undertake similar studies of his own countrymen. He himself confessed his debt to Miss Edgeworth, with gratitude and perhaps excessive deference. Miss Edgeworth wrote little after the death of her father in 1817. She was not a novelist of the first class; her characters tend to be creatures of one virtue or a single vice, and her tales are all inclined to be too moral—more moral than natural. But she wrote exactly what she set out to write, and served her generation well with her pen; nor can the present generation afford to overlook her work entirely, as it has intrinsic as well as historical interest and value.

Susan Edmonstone Ferrier (1782–1854) wrote three novels which resemble one another closely âlike in their merits and defects. The earliest of them, *Marriage*, is a series of sketches rather than a full-dress novel; many of its characters were drawn from real people, which enhanced its pungency north of the Tweed. The second novel, *The Inheritance*, has more plot, and is on the whole the best of the three. The negotiations for publishing Miss Ferrier's last novel, *Destiny: or the Chief's Daughter*, were carried out by Scott, who made good terms for her with the publishers. *Destiny* is somewhat disjointed as a whole, but contains admirable passages and sketches of characters.

It is customary but not wise to compare Miss Ferrier with Miss Austen. Miss Ferrier's books are ill-constructed; her wit is too caustic; mercy never seasons justice when she gives way to sarcasm; she takes sides for and against her characters, and has nothing of the Shakespearean detachment and impartiality of Miss Austen. She may much more reasonably be compared with Miss Edgeworth, than whom she is decidedly more witty and decidedly less amiable. There is a

curious blend of Smollett and Mackenzie in her writings; her sentimentality is derived from *The Man of Feeling*, and much of her rough, coarse fun from *Peregrine Pickle* and its fellows. She has, however, many merits, and no one has succeeded better in depicting the manners of the upper and middle classes in Scotland at a time when the national peculiarities were still in a great measure intact.

By far the greatest of these three women-novelists is **Jane Austen** (1775–1817), the seventh child and younger daughter of the rector of Steventon, in Hampshire. The events of her placid and secluded life are few and unremarkable. She lived in turn at Bath, Southampton, Chawton, and Winchester, the only variety in her quiet mode of living being an occasional visit to one of her brothers. She began to write at a very early age, and before she was sixteen had written many tales, mostly burlesque. *Love and Freindship* (sic), published in 1922, is a sort of caricature of Richardson, and, like his novels, is written in the form of letters. The literary history of her six famous novels is somewhat complicated, as three of them were written long before they were published. She had difficulty in finding a publisher for her first books; moreover, she was so true an artist that she polished all her work with loving care. It is not likely that we have any work which can be called " early " in its entirety, though the nuclei of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Northanger Abbey* are early *Sense and Sensibility* was roughly drafted, in the form of letters and with the title of *Elinor and Marianne*, in 1795; it was redrafted into more or less its final form two years later, but was not published until 1811, being the first of her novels to appear in print. *Pride and Prejudice*, originally named *First Impressions*, was written in 1796, refused next

salary of £1300 as clerk of the Court of Session, he bought the estate which he named Abbotsford, and began a series of costly building operations. He was anxious to acquire a property and found a family. In 1814 he felt that his poetical vein was becoming exhausted, and that he was being ousted from popularity as a poet by Byron. He recognized these facts with his customary good sense and cheerfulness. He found, while looking for some fishing-tackle in a drawer, the first part of *Waverley, or 'tis Sixty Years since*, which, in deference to the criticism of his friends, he had laid aside some ten years before. Scott read the portion previously written, thought his critics mistaken, wrote in three weeks the two volumes which were needed to complete the novel, and published it anonymously. The public eagerly welcomed the work of the unknown author. It was published on 7th July, and the sixth edition appeared before the end of the year. *Waverley* was followed in 1815 by *Guy Mannering* and in 1816 by *The Antiquary*, both by the same anonymous author. Scott officially preserved his anonymity until 1827, though most readers of *Waverley* identified him at once with the " Great Unknown ", and it was soon an open secret that he was the author of the Waverley Novels. Between 1814 and 1819 no fewer than nine of these exquisite studies of Scottish life and character appeared. *The Bla*[illegible] and *Old Mortality* were published in

January, 1821, and *The Pirate* in December of the same year. In the following year he published *The Fortunes of Nigel*, a study of the times of James I and VI, and next year *Peveril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, and *St. Ronan's Well*. Though *Quentin Durward* received rather a cold reception in Britain, it was hailed with delight in France and on the Continent generally, where it played no mean part in the Romantic Revival. *Redgauntlet* appeared in 1824, and *The Betrothed* and *The Talisman* (Tales of the Crusaders) in 1825. Meanwhile the failure of Scott's publishers, Constable and Cadell, and then of the firm of Ballantyne and Company, of which he was the head, brought him to the verge of ruin. He refused to become bankrupt, and determined to carry on the business for the benefit of his creditors. He laboured ceaselessly with this end in view. Sometimes twelve to fourteen hours a day were devoted to writing. *Woodstock* appeared in 1826; and in the next year *The Highland Widow*, *The Two Drovers*, and *The Surgeon's Daughter* (Chronicles of the Canongate, First Series). In 1828 appeared *The Fair Maid of Perth* (Chronicles of the Canongate, Second Series); *Anne of Geierstein* appeared in 1829. In 1830 Scott had a paralytic attack from which he never quite recovered. *Count Robert of Paris* was written after this attack, as was *Castle Dangerous*, the last of his novels. After travelling abroad vainly in search of health, Scott returned to Abbotsford, where he died on 21st September, 1832. Considerably more than half of the enormous debt of £117,000 was paid up in Scott's lifetime, and the estate was finally freed from debt in or about 1847.

Scott's personal popularity during his lifetime was quite without parallel. He endeared himself to all who knew him by his genial and magnetic personality. His powers of attraction not only overcame all sorts and

conditions of men, but won over animals of every kind to instant friendship with him. Those of his readers to whom he was not personally known felt for him almost as strong an affection as did those who knew him. As a literary influence he was in his day of paramount importance both in Great Britain and on the Continent. He did far more than Wordsworth or Coleridge or even Byron to popularize the Romantic Revival and to make the unpoetically-minded read poetry. About his importance in literary history there is no manner of doubt whatever; but attempts have been made and still are made, though not so frequently, to decry the absolute merit of much of his work. The truth about Scott is that he was the greatest improviser in our literature, and his work has the merits and defects of work that is done rapidly. Much of his writing was done before breakfast and at red-hot speed; his guests used to think it was impossible he could be writing, as he was always at their disposal. The Waverley Novels have given so much pleasure to so many millions that it seems ungrateful to tabulate their very obvious failings. Their plots are seldom well managed; the heroes and heroines are often men and women of straw and talk in a curiously stilted way. Occasionally (not so frequently as some critics say) the antiquary jostles the novelist into the background. There is no doubt that the Scottish novels are superior to the English ones, and those which deal with the eighteenth century are better than the mediæval romances. The merits of the best Waverleys are very great; as a depicter of the humours of Scottish life Scott has no peer, indeed as a portrayer of character he ranks above Dickens or Thackeray and equal to Fielding, whom he has far surpassed in the number of his successful creations. His supreme greatness lies in this, rather than in his romantic creations. Scott's

creative gifts are so great that we are apt to forget that he was hardly less supreme as biographer, historian, antiquary, and literary critic. In each of these four departments he was quite extraordinarily able; the width of his knowledge is astounding (it may be added humiliating) to the specialist of to-day. He was one of the last to learn much of his history from oral tradition, as Homer did. His fertility of invention, his creative powers, and his rapidity in working can only be compared with those of Shakespeare, whom we believe he also resembled in his modesty and his utter lack of cant about art.

Scott marks an epoch in the novel, and so nominally ends this chapter; but there are two or three minor novelists whom it is more convenient to mention here than in Chapter XI, which is devoted to the later history of the novel.

During a literary career which lasted over half a century, **William Harrison Ainsworth** (1805–1882) wrote some forty historical novels, of which the best known are *Rookwood*, *Jack Sheppard*, *The Tower of London*, *Old St. Paul's*, and *The Lancashire Witches* Ainsworth's novels are not remarkable for their subtle delineation of character; the diction of his heroes and heroines is often absurdly stilted; and he had little reverence for probability. Though his tales are frequently lurid and violent, they are also animated; he wrote with gusto and energy; his narrative style, too, is vastly better than the style of his dialogue. He is too slipshod to rank as a first-rate historical novelist; but he probably impressed upon many of his readers, who would otherwise have been unaware of it, that there is such a subject as history. His novels are readable enough and wholesome enough, though contemporary critics found fault with him for his idealizations of rogues.

James Justinian Morier (1780–1849), who was in the diplomatic service and spent several years in Persia, wrote seven or eight novels of which *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* is incomparably the best. It is, beyond question, the best picaresque novel in the English language, as was at once recognized by Scott, who, writing in the *Quarterly Review*, referred to it as "the Oriental *Gil Blas*", thus showing that he did not shrink from comparing it with the greatest of picaresque novels. Its liveliness and humour are delightful; it introduces its readers in the pleasantest way to the real East, which was as different from the East of Moore and Southey as day is from night. A thorough knowledge of *Hajji Baba* has been said to be the equivalent of twenty years' residence in Persia. Its accuracy of detail is most appreciated by those who are best able to judge; its vivacity and fun appeal to everyone.

John Galt (1779–1839) wrote fifty novels, twenty dramas, and much miscellaneous work. His half-dozen realistic Scottish novels alone are remembered. They include *The Ayrshire Legatees*, *The Annals of the Parish* (his best), *The Provost*, *Sir Andrew Wylie*, and *The Entail*. Galt at his best is very good, though his art is somewhat of the photographic order; few writers have handled the vernacular so capably. The Rev. Micah Balwhidder is almost worthy to stand beside Dr. Primrose, and Leddy Grippy in *The Entail* is depicted with almost Shakespearean art.

The seven curious novels of **Thomas Love Peacock** (1785–1866) have won him a place in literary history, though detailed histories would mention him even had he written nothing, for he was Shelley's intimate friend and Meredith's father-in-law. His novels are: *Headlong Hall*, *Melincourt*, *Nightmare Abbey*, *Maid Marian*, *The Misfortunes of Elphin*, *Crotchet Castle*, and, after a silence

of nearly thirty years, *Gryll Grange*. Of these, *Nightmare Abbey* and *Crotchet Castle* are perhaps the most brilliant, but they all have a charm and fascination that is all their own. They appeal to the head rather than to the heart, but have always found " fit audience though few ". They are practically without plot, and their characters are not men, but personified " humours " like those of Ben Jonson. Their virtue lies in their grace of style, accuracy of natural description, and sound common sense, and also depends not a little upon the charming lyrics they contain. They have already outlived, and will doubtless continue to outlive, many novels which were once popular, in the true sense of that word.

CHAPTER VIII

POETRY, NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Two or three years before the opening of the new century a new era in poetry began with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge. **William Wordsworth** (1770–1850) was the son of a prosperous attorney who was law-agent to the Earl of Lonsdale. He was educated at schools at Cockermouth, Penrith, and Hawkshead, and at the age of seventeen was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he did not distinguish himself, taking a pass-degree in 1791. The outstanding feature of his college days was a continental trip which he took during the long vacation of 1790. While in France he laid the foundations of his short-lived republican ardour. In 1791 and 1792 he again went abroad, on the pretext of learning enough

French to qualify him for the post of travelling tutor. He visited Paris, Orleans, and Blois, and almost threw in his lot with the Girondins. He returned to England in December, 1792, and for some years led a desultory life, steadily refusing to follow a definite profession. Early in 1793 he published his *Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. These poems are immature and conventional, but they contain vivid pictures of nature. A timely legacy of £900 from a friend permanently removed Wordsworth from the danger of having to enter the Church or the legal profession. In 1795 he settled with his sister Dorothy at Racedown, in Dorsetshire, where he wrote some satires which he suppressed, and a tragedy, *The Borderers*, not intended for the stage and not published until 1842. He was gradually casting the slough of his republican opinions, but the process was a slow and somewhat painful one. In 1795 he met Coleridge; their meeting had a far-reaching effect upon the work of both. In 1797 Wordsworth moved to Alfoxden, in Somersetshire, in order to be near Coleridge, who was then living at Nether Stowey. They were visited by Lamb and Hazlitt. In September, 1798, Wordsworth and Coleridge published jointly their famous *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth supplied the bulk of the poems; *The Ancient Mariner* and three other poems were the work of Coleridge. It contained some of Wordsworth's best work, such as *We are Seven*, *Simon Lee*, and *Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*, but it also contained some feeble and prosaic effusions. In 1798 the Wordsworths settled at Goslar, in Germany, with the intention of studying German and natural science. They returned to England after six months without having acquired much of either. They had been prepared to stay two years. Late in 1799 they settled at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, where

Wordsworth steadily laboured in his vocation. A second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* appeared (2 vols.) in 1800, with a famous preface by Wordsworth, who stated therein his theory of poetical diction, asserting that " there is no essential difference between the language of prose and that of metrical composition ". Wordsworth certainly had a strong case against the diction of the artificial school of poetry, but he overstated it, and was led into a paradoxical eulogy of the language of the uneducated, thereby laying himself open to much ridicule. In 1802 Wordsworth married, but his sister still remained a member of his household.

In May, 1805, Wordsworth finished *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind*, a poem which was intended to bear the same relation to *The Recluse* that " the Antechapel has to the body of a Gothic church ". It was not published until 1850. *The Recluse* was to be " a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society ", and owed its name to the fact of its " having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement ". The first book of the first part of *The Recluse* was written, but not published until 1888; the second part, *The Excursion*, was completed and published in 1814; the third part was only planned. In 1807 Wordsworth published a collection of poems in two volumes, including the *Ode to Duty*, the *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood, Miscellaneous Sonnets, Sonnets dedicated to Liberty*, and other poems. Wordsworth had moved from Dove Cottage to Allan Bank in 1808, and had gone to the parsonage at Grasmere in 1810 Early in 1813 he moved to Rydal Mount, where he lived until his death. In 1813 he was made Distributor of Stamps for the county of Westmorland, an office which brought him in about £400 a year. His duties were light. *The White*

Doe of Rylstone appeared in 1815, *Peter Bell* and *The Waggoner* in 1819, and *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* in 1822. By this time Wordsworth had published his best work; the rest of his life, save for some travels at home and abroad, was uneventful. His importance as a poet was recognized after the publication of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* in 1817. He received the degree of D.C.L. at Oxford in 1839, and after the death of Southey (1843) succeeded him as Poet Laureate. His one official poem was probably written by his son-in-law. Wordsworth died peacefully at Rydal Mount in 1850. His poetic laurels, "greener from the brows of him that utter'd nothing base", fell to the lot of Tennyson.

Wordsworth had unique gifts as a poet; but the story of his mental development is not an unusual story. To change from republicanism and heterodoxy to conservatism and the Church of England has been the experience of many. His beliefs, however, are of less value than his analysis of how he acquired them. He has given us a most valuable picture of the growth of a poet's mind. Wordsworth has suffered much from injudicious admirers, from those who would make it a pious article of belief that everything he wrote is good. Between his best work and his worst there is a great gulf fixed, wider than that which separates the best and the worst work of any other equally great poet. He "utter'd nothing base" in the moral sense of the word; but from the point of view of art there is much base metal in his writings, nor did he himself possess any touchstone which enabled him to distinguish this base metal from gold. He passed through the needle's eye of Matthew Arnold's approval only after dropping much of his poetical baggage. His best poems are beyond all praise; his worst deserve all that has been said against them. All his best work was written between 1798 and 1808.

It is to be noted that he always wrote better when he was out of his rut; travel and change of scene inspired him. On the strength of his best work he stands among the greatest of English poets, and takes a place near Virgil as a lover and interpreter of nature.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), whose name is indissolubly linked with Wordsworth's, was the son of the vicar of Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire. The father, a learned and eccentric man, died when his precocious son was barely nine years old. Coleridge was educated at Christ's Hospital, where he met Lamb, and at Jesus College, Cambridge, where he won the Browne medal for a Greek ode in 1792, but did not otherwise distinguish himself. He could not handle properly even the limited funds at the disposal of an undergraduate, but ran into debt, and to avoid his troubles enlisted in the 15th Dragoons, adopting the *nom de guerre* of Silas Tomkyn Comberback (ominous name for a trooper!) in order to retain his own initials. Trooper Comberback was certainly one of the king's worst bargains, and was bought out by his brothers four months later. He returned to Cambridge, was let off with a mere public reprimand, but did not graduate, and soon went to Bristol to join his friends Robert Southey and a young Quaker named Lovell. At this time Coleridge's political opinions were ultra-Radical, and his religious convictions more negative than positive. The three friends conceived the project of emigrating to America, and establishing a "pantisocracy" as they termed it, or community in which all should be equal, on the banks of the Susquehanna, which attracted them by the sound of its name. Like most schemes of the kind, pantisocracy was never put into practice. The three pantisocrats married three sisters, Lovell died not long after, and Southey manfully shouldered the responsi-

bility of supporting his widow and child, afterwards bearing the additional burden of Coleridge's family. Coleridge published a volume of poems in 1796, and in the same year took a cottage at Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, where, soothed and supported by the companionship of Wordsworth, who came to reside in Alfoxden, he wrote much of his best poetry, in particular *The Ancient Mariner*, which appeared in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), and the first part of *Christabel*, which was not printed until 1816. In 1800 he took up his residence beside Southey at Keswick, while Wordsworth lived at Grasmere in the same neighbourhood. These three poets were often spoken of as the "Lake School"—a mere "geographical expression", not implying a similarity in their work. In 1804 Coleridge went to Malta to re-establish his health, which was seriously impaired by opium-eating. His slavery to this habit, baneful to all but fatal to one of his supine and procrastinating disposition, began about 1796. He was never able entirely to shake off the habit, but, after a stubborn fight, managed to get it more or less under control for the last sixteen or seventeen years of his life. It separated him from his family, alienated almost all his friends, and seriously limited his literary output. In 1806 he returned to England, and after ten years of somewhat desultory literary work as lecturer and contributor to periodicals, he took refuge from the world in the house of his friend Gillman, at Highgate. Here he passed the rest of his days, holding weekly conversaziones in which he poured himself forth in eloquent monologues, being by general consent one of the most wonderful talkers of the time. He had, however, long been incapable of concentrating his energies on anything, and of the many years he spent in the leisure and quietness of Highgate nothing remains but the *Table Talk*

and the fragmentary notes and criticisms gathered together and edited by his nephew, valuable enough of their kind, but less than might have been expected of Coleridge. He died in 1834.

The dreamy character of Coleridge's poetry eminently exhibits the man. In his best moments he has a fine sublimity of thought and expression not surpassed by Milton; but he is often turgid and verbose. *The Ancient Mariner* is his greatest finished work; *Christabel*, which handled its metre in an entirely new and revolutionary way, is unfinished, and the wonderful opium vision, *Kubla Khan*, a mere fragment. His best poems, more than those of any of his contemporaries, more, perhaps, than those of any other English poet, are "such stuff as dreams are made on".

Coleridge's friend and brother-in-law, **Robert Southey** (1774–1843), was educated at Westminster and Balliol College, Oxford. After thinking in turn of the Church, of medicine, and of law as a career, he adopted literature as a profession, and, in September, 1803, settled at Greta Hall, Keswick. He shared this house with the Coleridges, and by means of unremitting study and toil he supported not merely his own but also Coleridge's family. His literary output was enormous; he wrote in all some ten volumes of verse and forty of prose. He was made Poet Laureate in 1813, but as he succeeded H. J. Pye, who in his turn succeeded several nonentities, he may be considered to have restored the office to some of the glory conferred on it by Dryden. His salary, no longer augmented by the annual tierce of canary, he prosaically but characteristically set aside for paying the premiums on his life-insurance policy. He died in 1843.

Southey's poems, if not great, are admirable, especially some of his short poems, such as *The Battle of*

Blenheim and *The Holly Tree.* There is some truth in Porson's prophecy — not unworthy of the Delphic oracle — that "*Madoc* will be read when Homer and Virgil are forgotten"; but *Thalaba* and *The Curse of Kehama* can still be read; and Southey, it should be noted, was the first of the Romantic Revivalists to introduce "the gorgeous East" into his poems. Southey was a fair poet, a good prose-writer, and, next to Fielding and Scott, one of the most lovable of British authors.

When **Scott** (1771–1832) published the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1802 he included in the collection some poems by himself, in imitation of older ballads. These poems raised great expectations with regard to original work by him; these expectations were fully realized when *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* appeared in 1805. In 1808 he published *Marmion*, which is considered by many the finest of his poems. In 1810 his third romance in verse, *The Lady of the Lake*, was published, and was at least as great a success as the two previous poems. *The Vision of Don Roderick*, published for the benefit of the distressed Portuguese and written in the Spenserian stanza, appeared in 1811. *Rokeby*, less popular than the preceding poems, and less admirable for its story than for its masterly character-drawing, and *The Bridal of Triermain* appeared in 1813. *The Lord of the Isles*, which he wrote with less than his usual gusto, was published in 1815. In October, 1816, Scott published for the benefit of soldiers' widows a poem on the *Field of Waterloo*, and in 1817 the last of his long poems, *Harold the Dauntless.*

Scott's novels have somewhat eclipsed the fame of his poems. In his longer poems he clearly does not belong to the front rank of our poets, but his vividly-described scenes, his chivalric spirit, and his galloping metre grip

the reader and cause Scott's devotees to compare him with Homer, by no means absurdly. His shorter poems are, many of them, of the very highest excellence (*Proud Maisie*, *A weary lot is thine, fair maid*, *The Coronach*), and need not fear comparison with any lyrics of their kind.

Scott's poetical romances were ousted from popular favour by the poems of **Lord Byron** (1788–1824). George Gordon Byron succeeded to the family title at the age of ten. He was educated at Harrow and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where, thanks to the privileges then extended to noblemen, he took his M.A. degree at the end of three years, instead of the customary seven. Except for the performance of some athletic feats and the formation of some useful friendships, Byron wasted his time at Cambridge. In 1807 he issued his first collection of poems, *Hours of Idleness*, a title which implied what was not the case, that the noble author had not taken much pains with the contents. The little book contained nothing of much merit, but was castigated with undue severity in the *Edinburgh Review*. This caustic critique roused the slumbering energy in Byron, and drew from him his first really notable effort, the celebrated *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. It is modelled upon Pope, and, though it lacks the polished malignity of Pope's mature satires, it was no mean feat for a young peer who had barely attained his majority. Soon after its appearance in 1809 he started to go upon that modification of the Grand Tour which the activities of Napoleon made the only alternative to staying at home. He spent two years on his travels, and visited Portugal, Spain, Gibraltar, Malta, Greece, and Asia Minor. The fruit of these travels was the fine poem of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the first two cantos of which were published in 1812

the Continent an uncertainty prevails, or prevailed until lately, as to whether the greatest English poet was Byron or Shakespeare. His reputation in his native land has not been so long-lived. He had no ear for the niceties of diction, and constantly committed faults of rhyme, syntax, and even grammar which an Englishman notices more readily and pardons less readily than a foreigner. He wrote too much and too rapidly; we would rank him higher if he had written half what he wrote, even if the remaining half were no better than it is at present. His dramas, of which the best is *Manfred*, have no value as dramas and not a great deal as verse. His tales, of which the best is *Mazeppa*, are marred by theatricality, as well as by errors of technique. By far the best of Byron's work is to be found in his three *ottava rima* poems, *Beppo*, *The Vision of Judgment*, and *Don Juan*. In them his somewhat graceless genius found free scope for the exercise of its powers; they are original and inimitable as only works of the first class can be. Much of Byron's writing, indeed, is rhetoric rather than poetry.

Byron's friend, **Percy Bysshe Shelley** (1792–1822), came of an old family of Sussex squires, and was educated at Eton and University College, Oxford. While he was still a freshman, he published a small pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*, and sent copies of it to certain university and college dignitaries. He was accordingly expelled from the university; not long afterwards he made a chivalrous but most unwise marriage. His earliest work did not give much promise of his genius. He wrote two crude romances in the manner of " Monk " Lewis, but even their names are all but forgotten to-day. The pamphlets which he contributed to the cause of Ireland were not above the standard of compositions of that kind. His first poem

of importance, *Queen Mab*, was privately printed in 1813. It is full of promise, but aggressive and intolerant in its tone. In the autumn of 1815 he wrote his first great poem, *Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude.* After his second marriage he settled at Great Marlow, Buckinghamshire, where he wrote his long narrative poem originally known as *Laon and Cythna* but rechristened *The Revolt of Islam* after revision. Early in 1818 it was feared that Shelley was developing consumption, and he left England for Italy, where he was destined to spend the remaining four years of his life. Life in Italy amid the most beautiful scenery improved the quality and increased the quantity of Shelley's work. His friendship with the novelist Thomas Love Peacock had made him an ardent classical scholar, and his study of Greek was immensely beneficial to his mind, increasing its strength and decreasing its aggressiveness. He completed his *Rosalind and Helen* in 1818, and in the same year wrote *Julian and Maddalo*, which was inspired by his friendship with Byron. In 1819 he produced *Prometheus Unbound*, one of the greatest lyrical dramas in the world, and his fine tragedy *The Cenci*, perhaps the best non-Elizabethan tragedy in English. Shelley's satirical writings were not so successful. *The Masque of Anarchy* was inspired by the "Peterloo" massacre; *Peter Bell the Third* was a skit on Wordsworth's poem almost as dreary as its model; and *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, a satire upon George IV and Queen Caroline, was an imitation of Aristophanes, and as little successful as such imitations always are. During this same period Shelley wrote many of his most beautiful lyrics, including the greatest of them all, the *Ode to the West Wind.* In 1820 he wrote his *Letter to Maria Gisborne* and *The Witch of Atlas*, a fantastic but brilliant poem His other longer poems include *Epipsychidion*, inspired by a beautiful girl.

Emilia Viviani, who was confined in the convent of St. Anna; *Adonais*, a lament for the death of Keats; *Hellas*, a lyrical drama suggested by contemporary events in Greece; the unfinished historical drama *Charles I*; and the unfinished poem *The Triumph of Life*. Shelley was a highly accomplished translator, and his versions of the Homeric hymn *To Mercury* and of *The Cyclops* of Euripides are masterpieces. Among his prose works, *A Defence of Poetry* is a remarkable and original study in æsthetics.

There is a certain amount of unsolved and probably insoluble mystery about how Shelley met his death. He was drowned while sailing from Leghorn to Spezzia; but it is uncertain whether the boat (the *Don Juan*) capsized in a sudden squall, or whether it was purposely run down by an Italian felucca intent upon robbery. Shelley's body was cast ashore ten days later near Viareggio. He had a volume of Keats in one pocket and a volume of Sophocles in the other. His body was cremated in the presence of his friends Byron, Hunt, and Trelawny, and his ashes were buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome.

In Shelley the spirit of lyric poetry was incarnate. His work is the quintessence of poetry, which is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge". *To a Skylark*, *To Night*, and *The Cloud* are among the best known of his lyrics, but there are many others as perfect if less popular. The greatness of his genius is hardly more remarkable than the mental growth he displayed in his later days. At first he was petulant and rebellious, and like a creature from another world, but he went from strength to strength in wisdom and in self-control. It was symbolic of his art that when his body was washed up his pockets contained the most perfect of Attic poets and the greatest of his own contemporaries. His poetry

ance; but is, as Hunt called it, "a wilderness of sweets". Its faults are those of youth and exuberance.

In June, 1818, Keats went on a walking tour in Scotland, but the exertion was too much for his health, and he was ordered by a doctor at Inverness to return home. Two notorious attacks were made upon the poetry of Keats, one in *Blackwood's Magazine* and the other in *The Quarterly Review.* Offensive and ignorant as these articles are, they are by no means exceptional, but are typical of the rancorous criticism of those days. Their bitterness is partly due to party feeling, for, though Keats himself was nothing of a politician, some of his friends, especially Hunt, were Liberals, and the two hostile periodicals were uncompromisingly Tory. In 1819 Keats, although his health was beginning to suffer, was producing some of his best work. By February, 1820, he was fatally ill. His third and last book, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and other poems,* appeared in July, 1820. This book contains all his best work. All the poems included in it were written between March, 1818, and October, 1819. *Isabella* is a beautifully retold tale of Boccaccio. The unfinished *Hyperion* is a majestic and Miltonic poem, which marks a great advance upon *Endymion. Lamia* is a beautiful poem modelled in its metre and style upon Dryden, but no close imitation. Like some of our greatest writers, Keats could imitate without impairing his essential originality. The unrivalled series of odes, *To Autumn, On a Grecian Urn, To a Nightingale,* and the others, are perhaps the greatest of all the poems of Keats. His work now won some recognition, notably a laudatory article in the *Edinburgh Review.* His health, however, speedily declined, and consumption strengthened its grip upon him. He had attacks of hæmorrhage in June, 1820, and in September he left for Italy. He stayed about a fort-

closeness of their tragic deaths. Shelley probably was a greater poet, but he was what biologists term "a sport", influenced by none and influencing few. Keats is sprung "of Earth's first blood", and the torch which he kindled has been handed from one generation to another, and is even yet alight.

Though **Samuel Rogers** (1763–1855) lived more than half of his exceptionally long life in the nineteenth century, his poetry is essentially eighteenth-century poetry. His best-known poem, *The Pleasures of Memory*, was in fact published eight years before the close of the eighteenth century. It appeared during what may be termed a poetical interregnum; had it appeared ten years earlier or ten years later it might have enjoyed a merely moderate success. As it was, it became widely popular; it may rank as the swan-song of the poetic diction of the eighteenth century. It is written in good taste, and is smooth and pleasing, but deficient in the more positive virtues of poetry. The death of Rogers's father made him a rich man at the age of thirty; he became a sleeping partner in the family bank, and laid himself out to be a leader of literary and artistic society in London. He was a powerful influence in London for sixty years, and his breakfasts and dinners were as celebrated as his poems. He had a caustic tongue but a kind heart, and used his wealth, power, and influence to help struggling men of letters. He adorned his house with works of art of the best kind, and became a notable connoisseur. He wrote little, but polished that little fastidiously. His later poems are now little read; they include *Jacqueline*, *Human Life*, and *Italy*. His great wealth enabled him to issue sumptuous editions of his poems with engravings by Turner and other famous artists. These editions sold well, and are still valued more for the engravings than for the letterpress. When

Wordsworth died, Rogers was offered the Laureateship, but declined it on the score of his great age; whereupon Tennyson was appointed to it.

Rogers was, in many respects, most fortunate in the circumstances of his life. Length of days was in his right hand, and in his left riches and honour. His poetical gifts were small, but he made the most of them, and his poems are pleasing examples of what cultivation will do for an exiguous Muse. The figure of the "ugly little man, a wrinkled Mæcenas, in a brown coat" stands prominently in the literary history of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Byron's friend and biographer, Thomas Moore (1779–1852), was born in Dublin and educated at Trinity College in that city. In 1799 he went to London to study law, bringing with him a translation of the so-called poems of Anacreon, which gave him some literary reputation. His next venture, *Poems by the late Thomas Little* (1801), increased that reputation. In 1806 he published his *Odes and Epistles*, and in the following year undertook to write words for a number of Irish national airs arranged by Sir John Stevenson. In these *Irish Melodies*, which were not finished till 1834, he found the work for which his talent was peculiarly fitted. Some of them are tawdry enough; but in many of them "music and sweet poetry agree"; the words should not and indeed cannot be divorced from the music. Moore's heavy satires *Corruption* and *Intolerance* and *The Sceptic* have little to recommend them, but his playfully malicious lampoons and social and political satires are excellent of their kind, though perhaps too topical to attract many readers to-day. Such writings include *The Twopenny Post Bag*, *The Fudge Family in Paris*, and *Rhymes on the Road*. His most ambitious work was his Eastern romance *Lalla Rookh*.

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Thomas Campbell (1777–1844) was born in Glasgow and educated at the High School and University there. When only twenty-two years of age he published his best-known poem, *The Pleasures of Hope.* It was an instantaneous, almost a sensational success. It is a typical eighteenth-century didactic poem, reminiscent in its title and general plan of Rogers. It is, of course, written in couplets, and ranks as good rhetoric rather than as poetry. To modern taste, it has lost its savour, but its success at the time of its appearance was so great that it made Campbell for the rest of his life too fastidious about his writings, in his anxiety to keep up his reputation. It was published at a more or less dead season; Crabbe was silent just then, and *Lyrical Ballads*, published six months previously, had not emerged from the obscurity of an anonymous and provincial publication. In 1803 Campbell published a revised edition of his famous poem, to which he added some admirable short poems, including *Hohenlinden*, *Ye Mariners of England*, and *The Exile of Erin.* In 1809 he

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Campbell was a typical poet of a transition period. He was brought up to admire the poetry of the old school, and imitated it in his earliest and most popular poem. He never confessed his allegiance to the newer school, indeed he professed to prefer the eighteenth-century poets, but in some of his best poems he clearly showed that he was influenced by Wordsworth and Coleridge. His promise was greater than his performance; his longer poems are dead or moribund; but he has written no inconsiderable number of short poems which mankind will not willingly let die. His war poems are especially good, avoiding as they do jingoism on the one hand and banality on the other.

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son then spent nine years in perfecting himself in his art; no poet ever put himself through a more arduous apprenticeship. The result of this severe discipline is evident in the two volumes of 1842, *Poems by Alfred Tennyson.* Like Spenser, Tennyson is most delightfully a poet in poems that strive to be no more than decorative and musical renderings of a dreamy mood. *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, *The Dying Swan*, *The Lady of Shalott*, *Mariana*, *The Lotus Eaters*, *The Talking Oak*, *Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere*, these are poems which only he could have written, and are as secure against changes of fashion as the *Prothalamion* or *Il Penseroso.* But the dramatic, the philosophic, and the didactic spirit was moving Tennyson to produce poems of varying merit: dramatic studies, as the now perfected *Oenone*, *Galahad*, and *St. Agnes's Eve*, the *Morte d'Arthur* (first prelude of the *Idylls of the King*), *St. Simeon Stylites*, *Ulysses*, in which Tennyson's finished art is given a deeper emotional quality; metaphysical poems, like *The Two Voices* and *The Vision of Sin*, the latter not more characteristic of Tennyson's fundamental thought and hope than of his curious metrical felicity. In others, as *Locksley Hall* and the *English Idylls*, Tennyson's art is used to embroider themes inspired by a vein of sentiment more Victorian than perennial. The publication of these volumes at once placed Tennyson at the head of all contemporary English poets.

Tennyson's range of topics is fully represented in the 1842 volumes — studies of moods, English rural life, mediæval romance, classical legend, the mysteries of life and death and immortality. His later poems are a fuller elaboration of these, with an art that tends to grow more precious, and in a spirit which grows more didactic. *The Princess* is a *jeu d'esprit* elaborated and

brocaded out of all proportion to the theme, but adorned with some of the loveliest of Tennyson's highly-sophisticated lyrics, notably the finely-wrought unrhymed *Tears, idle tears*. *In Memoriam*, the work of almost seventeen years, expresses, in a poem of one hundred and thirty-two sections, each the rendering of a single mood, Tennyson's sorrow for the early death of his friend Hallam, and his brooding over death and the problems of modern science. The thought of the poem makes less appeal to-day than the beauty of the felicitous stanza and of individual sections rendering sombre moods and lovely landscapes. It is, perhaps, a mistake to try to read the poem as a whole, as the long time spent on its composition deprived it of unity. In 1850 Tennyson was appointed Poet Laureate. The *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* is one of the best official poems ever written, though when it appeared its form was too novel to be popular. *Maud and Other Poems* (1855) contains striking examples of Tennyson's command of metrical effects and his power of adapting his varying cadences to changes of mood. *Maud* itself, a monodrama, was ill-received, partly because its story was a little difficult to follow, and partly because the public insisted on identifying the unbalanced hero with the author. It contains some of the best of Tennyson's lyrics.

The great work, however, of Tennyson's middle years was *The Idylls of the King*, published in batches between 1859 and 1885. In a style of chiselled, polished, jewelled exquisiteness the poet told a series of stories from Malory of Arthur and his knights and the quest of the Holy Grail, in which he strove, not altogether successfully, to modify the chivalrous Catholic spirit of the original by the infusion of a modern, vaguely religious, philanthropic, and somewhat maidenly sentiment.

Their enormous popularity in their own day has yielded to a depreciation which fails to do justice to their wonderfully varied and finished art. *Enoch Arden*, a simple story that Crabbe might have told in his bare manner and creaky verse, is decorated with all the resources of Tennyson's blank verse and coloured description. His dialect poems *Northern Farmer, Old Style* and *Northern Farmer, New Style* are happier renderings of rural themes.

In his last years Tennyson, under the influence of a poignant sense of disillusionment and of discontent with the age of science and "progress," whose advent he had hailed, shook off his tendency to over-decoration and wrote some poems of a direct and piercing power which, with his early coloured and musical renderings of dream and mood, are likely to outlive his more ambitious pieces. *Lucretius*, *The Revenge: a Ballad of the Fleet*, *Ballads and Other Poems*, *Tiresias and Other Poems*, *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, *Demeter and Other Poems*, and *The Death of Oenone* included poems that show a weakening grasp and something of an hysterical vein, but also some which are the finest expression of Tennyson's fierce patriotism, his passionate sympathy with certain characters and moods, and his brooding preoccupation with the destiny of man wandering between faiths which are rooted in fear, and science that threatens to dispel hope as well as fear.

Tennyson's popularity as a poet was without precedent, and was all the more remarkable because he was by nature a recluse and had a manner which seemed forbidding to strangers. He was an admirable self-critic, let nothing go out until he had polished it to the best of his ability, and corrected and altered much in later editions. There is, in consequence, singularly little in his collected poems that is unworthy of him;

it is all work of a high standard, and the poems of his last years show hardly any signs of having been written by an octogenarian. His command over metre was masterly, as was his skill in selecting a metre suitable for the subject he had in hand. He proved himself always familiar, if not exactly sympathetic, with the thought of the day; in his virtues and in his prejudices alike he showed himself to be a typical Englishman. So his popularity and his immense prestige are easily explained. A reaction was inevitable, though many of the objections made to Tennyson's work should have been directed against the feeble outpourings of a host of his imitators. For a time Tennyson was grouped with such objects as antimacassars, horsehair sofas, Albert the Good, and the Crystal Palace as "Early Victorian". We were forbidden to admire him by poets who, judging from their own compositions, might have said, with Bottom, "I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones." Another reaction has now set in, and it is recognized that a good deal of Tennyson is as certain of immortality as anything can be, while some of his more ambitious writings have already faded, and will not, in all probability, revive. The reaction against Tennyson's finished musical art is not unlike that which Donne and Jonson led against the mellifluous diffuseness of Spenser; and, despite obvious differences, Spenser and Tennyson occupy somewhat of the same rank among English poets, not the very highest, because of a certain lack of intensity and insight, yet surpassed by few in their mastery of all the picturesque and musical capacities of our language.

Second only to Tennyson among Victorian poets was **Robert Browning** (1812–1889), whose followers were, however, as a rule a little more learned and a little less elegant than those of Tennyson Browning, the son of a

well-to-do banker, was educated for the most part privately. His first published poem was *Pauline*, a Shelleian poem of much promise, which did not attract much public attention. *Paracelsus*, a most remarkable and characteristic poem, appeared in 1835, before he was twenty-three; it did not secure him fame, but won him the notice and eventually the friendship of many of the leading literary men of the day. *Sordello*, a most obscure poem, was published in 1840. The story of the Mantuan troubadour was hailed with delight by perfervid Browningites, when Browningism came into fashion; but it can hardly be called entertaining reading, and was at a later date characterized by its author as "stodgy stuff". It alienated many of Browning's none too numerous admirers when it appeared. Browning published his next poems in the form of double-columned pamphlets, under the general title of *Bells and Pomegranates*, between 1841 and 1846. Of them *Pippa Passes* is perhaps the most pleasing and popular of all Browning's longer poems. *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* was published in March, 1850. *Men and Women*, with its exquisite address to Mrs. Browning, whom he had married in 1846, was published in 1855; it was followed by a long period of silence — nine years. *Dramatis Personæ*, a notable volume, appeared in 1864; it contains *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Caliban upon Setebos*, *Confessions*, and *Prospice*, besides many other fine poems. His longest and greatest poem, *The Ring and the Book*, was published in four monthly instalments between November, 1868, and February, 1869. Its 21,134 lines tell, from ten different points of view, the somewhat sordid story of a triple murder which took place at Rome in January, 1698. The poem, in spite of its formidable length, and in spite of one or two of its twelve books falling below the others in interest, became at once

popular, and its fame increased the demand for Browning's earlier poems. He never wrote anything better than the books of this poem entitled *Giuseppe Caponsacchi*, *Pompilia*, *The Pope*, and *Guido*, which show to perfection his handling of the dramatic monologue, a form which he may be said to have invented. *Balaustion's Adventure* appeared in 1871, and its sequel, *Aristophanes' Apology*, four years later. In 1872 he published *Fifine at the Fair*, a difficult poem which discouraged some of his admirers; and in 1873 *Red Cotton Nightcap Country*, founded on a disagreeable story which had filled the French newspapers two years previously. *The Inn Album*, another unpleasant story, appeared in 1875; it was followed by *Pacchiarotto* in 1876. His other later books include *Dramatic Idylls*, *Jocoseria*, *Ferishtah's Fancies*, and *Asolando*. The last-named volume appeared on the day of Browning's death, 12th December, 1889.

Browning was a man of extraordinary physical and mental vigour; his literary career lasted for fifty-six years; and up to the last his eye was not dimmed nor his natural force abated. His chief characteristic was his invincible optimism. His voice, therefore, was peculiarly grateful to many in the 'seventies and 'eighties who wished for a gospel of comfort, and who were beginning to weary of the elegance and polish of the Tennysonian school. Browningism became a cult, which was propagated by the Browning Society, founded in 1881. Browning is said to have referred an admirer, who asked for light to be thrown on some dark passage, to this somewhat absurd society. It is hardly necessary to say that many of Browning's perfervid disciples admired precisely what was least admirable in his work. Certain features of his writings appeal to those who like the more difficult variety of crossword puzzle, or who

have for their command "Some peaceful province in Acrostic land". These features are not characteristic of Browning's strength but of his weakness. His difficulty has often been exaggerated, though his poems are certainly at times hard to understand from the quick transitions of thought, and are not infrequently rugged and harsh in expression. He liked "to dock the smaller parts of speech", and had too great a love for recondite learning, probably failing to recognize it as such. He needs (what all writers need to some extent) his audience to meet him half-way, and to pay him an ordinarily courteous amount of attention. If this is done, many of his difficulties will vanish. In his shorter poems, especially his lyrical pieces, these difficulties do not exist as a rule; such poems are among the best in the language. His principal works, however, are his dramatic monologues, and they will be remembered not for their abstract thought so much as for their thorough understanding of the heart and mind of man, their courageous optimism, their tenderness, and their humour. Browning is not often a sweet singer and is sometimes not a singer at all, but he was in the opinion of many, and is in the opinion of some, the most eminent poet of the Victorian age.

Browning's wife, who was Miss **Elizabeth Moulton Barrett** (1806–1861), was an invalid from the age of fifteen, when, in endeavouring to saddle her pony, she fell and injured her spine. For many years she was obliged to spend much of her time lying on her back. Her first important book of verse, *The Seraphim and Other Poems*, appeared in 1838. A two-volume collection of her poems, containing some of her best pieces, appeared in 1844. By this time, in spite of her apparently chronic invalidism, she was a prominent figure in contemporary literature. In May, 1845, she met

Browning for the first time; they fell in love with each other almost at once, and were secretly married sixteen months later. The marriage was virtually a runaway match, as Mr. Barrett had a morbid aversion to any of his daughters marrying, and Elizabeth's health did not permit her to face a scene with him. A week after the ceremony the pair made their way to the Continent, and eventually made their home in Florence. Her exquisite *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, actually her own love-poems, was presented to her husband soon after their marriage, privately printed. *Casa Guidi Windows*, a poem on the Italian struggle for liberty, appeared in 1851. *Aurora Leigh*, the longest and most ambitious of her works, a sort of blank-verse novel with a purpose, in nine books and eleven thousand lines, was published in 1851. *Poems before Congress*, mainly inspired by the Italian struggle, appeared in 1860, and a posthumous volume, *Last Poems*, in 1862.

When Browning married Miss Barrett he was regarded as the clever-enough man who had married England's greatest poetess. Posterity has reversed this judgment. Much that Mrs. Browning wrote has gone quite out of fashion, nor, as far as anyone can see, will there be a swing of the pendulum in her favour. *Aurora Leigh*, considered daring in its day, is now more provocative of weariness than of thought. Her shorter poems are marred by being too long and by innumerable faulty rhymes. She simply had no conception of the technique of poetry, and seems to have learnt nothing in this respect from the Greek poets, her favourites, or from her early enthusiasm for Pope. She had considerable poetical gifts, and no gift of self-criticism. Once and once only did she hit the mark; her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* rank with the greatest love-poems in the language.

Less famous as a poet than as a critic, **Matthew Arnold** (1822–1888) is, nevertheless, one of the major poets of his day. A son of the famous headmaster of Rugby, he was educated at that school and at Balliol College, Oxford, and became in due course an inspector of schools. In 1849 he published and afterwards withdrew a small volume entitled *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems*, and in 1852 he published and withdrew *Empedocles on Etna*. A volume of poems, with an admirable critical preface, appeared in 1853, and a second series in 1855. In 1857 his critical and poetical powers were recognized by his being appointed professor of poetry at Oxford; when his five years' term of office expired, he was appointed for another five years. The first-fruits of his professorship was *Merope*, an imitation of the letter but not of the spirit of Greek tragedy. *New Poems* appeared in 1867. Arnold's poems have never enjoyed the popularity of those of Tennyson or even of those of Browning, but they have always had many admirers. They are full of the Greek spirit, and are cunningly wrought; he would perhaps have been wiser sometimes to give his muse the reins. He was in some respects too fastidious, and yet he had at times a defective ear, so that there are flaws even in his most carefully polished work.

It is seldom that a poet wins a high reputation by means of one slender volume, and that a translation; but **Edward FitzGerald's** (1809–1883) translation of the Persian astronomer-poet Omar Khayyám has outlived several changes of fashion and is as well known to-day as any poem of its time. FitzGerald was a peculiar man and led the life of a recluse; but he was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he formed a lifelong friendship with Tennyson and his brothers and with Thackeray. FitzGerald's translation of Omar

Khayyám originally appeared in 1859, in the form of a small pamphlet (75 quatrains); it drifted with rapidity to the "penny box" in second-hand bookstalls, but was discovered by Rossetti, who let its true value be widely known. A second edition containing 110 quatrains appeared in 1868. It is a remarkable piece of work, and has had a profound influence, considering its shortness and its orientalism, upon much modern poetry. It is not a literal translation, but is done with extraordinary skill; as Tennyson says, it is "A planet equal to the sun which cast it". There are few translations of which this can be said.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) was the son of an Italian refugee, and was trained as an artist, spending four years at a drawing academy. He was even more precocious as a poet than as an artist, and *The Blessed Damozel* was written, in its original form, when he was nineteen. In 1848 he helped to found the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the other members of which profoundly influenced his art as displayed in his pictures and poems. To its periodical, *The Germ*, which expired after its fourth number, he contributed several of his best poems. He developed his powers considerably in both the branches of art of which he was master, but did not publish anything for some time, though some of his poems circulated freely in manuscript. In 1861, thanks to the generosity of Ruskin, he published his *Early Italian Poets*, a volume of exquisitely-wrought translations, at once spirited and faithful, showing unmistakably their author's genius. A volume of poems published in 1870 took the literary world by storm, and set its author at once in the front rank of living poets. In 1881 he published a volume of poems (*Ballads and Sonnets*) containing, amongst other things, his ballad-epic of *Rose Mary*, his ballads *The White*

Defence of Guinevere and Other Poems, which did not, at the time of its first appearance, attract much attention. His *Life and Death of Jason* appeared in 1867, and his *Earthly Paradise*, a collection of twenty-four tales in verse, his best-known and in a sense his best volume of poetry, was published between 1868 and 1870. After the publication of *Jason* (which was originally intended for *The Earthly Paradise*, but grew too bulky), Morris was generally recognized as one of the foremost poets of his time. His epic *Sigurd the Volsung* appeared in 1876. It is probably his best work, and has been called by competent critics "the most Homeric poem since Homer". Politics, fine-printing and other activities somewhat reduced Morris's literary output during the closing years of his life, though he wrote a good number of prose romances.

Morris was a man of the most forceful personality, and his interests and enthusiasms were manifold. He practised many arts, because according to his conception all art was one. He wished to go back to the Middle Ages, not because he was retrogressive, but because he thought civilization had taken the wrong turning, and that to regain the right path it was necessary to go back to where the ways had parted. His influence both on poetry and house decoration was profound and salutary. The Muse, however, is a jealous mistress, and does not brook being one of a number of rivals; but Morris thoroughly enjoyed writing his poems, which cost him little effort, and he succeeded in conveying some of his enjoyment to his readers.

Our most gifted poetess is probably **Christina Rossetti** (1830–1894), sister of D. G. Rossetti, and, like her two brothers and her sister, full of talent and exceptionally precocious. She was of a deeply religious nature, and at an early age attached herself to the Anglo-

Catholic wing of the Church of England. Her desire was to enter a religious sisterhood, but her sense of duty kept her at home. *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, containing some of her best work (*A Birthday*, *Up-hill*, *The Convent Threshold*, etc.), was published in 1862. In 1866 appeared *The Prince's Progress*, which also contains exquisite work. During the last twenty years of her life, when her health was failing, she wrote a few more poems and many devotional works. She had the gift of song; her somewhat circumscribed life and her somewhat too austere religion modified but did not annul that gift. There is hardly a poem of hers in which it is not seen. Her devotional verse, if such a name be appropriate, for her devout spirit shines in everything she wrote, is only to be equalled by the religious poets of the seventeenth century, such as Herbert and Vaughan. She was a mistress of plain and simple language, which forms a striking contrast to the mysticism of her thought. Her gifts place her but a little short of being in the first class of our poets. Her chief faults are a certain narrowness of range and a certain morbidity of temperament.

Coventry Patmore (1823–1896) established his reputation as a poet by the publication of the four parts of *The Angel in the House* between 1854 and 1862. His other important volume of poetry, *The Unknown Eros and other Odes*, appeared in 1877. There is a curious gulf between his two principal publications. *The Angel in the House*, with its glorification of domesticity, is a thoroughly Victorian poem; *The Unknown Eros* seems, on the contrary, to be modelled upon Milton in his capacity of " mighty mouth'd inventor of harmonies ". Patmore's two muses, domestic and Miltonic, not infrequently allowed him to fall into prose and bathos, but more frequently inspired him to write what is, of

its kind, quite first-rate. Patmore was a man of unusual character: a poet who was an admirable man of business; a man at once choleric and humble-minded, egotistic and unselfish; a convert to the Roman Catholic Church and yet no unquestioning believer in her dogmas or personnel. His character is reflected in his curiously unequal but attractive poems. He was quite blind to the banalities of his own work, but in one respect was a sound self-critic. When he felt he had nothing to say, he said nothing.

Francis Thompson (1859–1907) published his first volume of poems in 1893; by far the most magnificent of these poems was *The Hound of Heaven. Sister Songs* followed in 1895, and *New Poems* in 1897. Like Patmore, Thompson was an ardent Roman Catholic, in fact at one time it was his intention to enter the priesthood; much of his work is inspired by a mystical religious fervour which makes it resemble the work of Crashaw and the other seventeenth-century mystics. Thompson at his best wrote noble poetry, but his work is not infrequently marred by odd words and abstruse, sometimes even incomprehensible phrases. Such unfortunate lapses make some of his poems appear frigid; when he avoided them his lines are glowing and fervid.

George Meredith's (1828–1909) achievements as a novelist have somewhat overshadowed his performance as a poet, though the quasi-sonnet sequence *Modern Love*, *Love in the Valley*, and some of his shorter poems are haunting and melodious, in spite of their occasional obscurity. He was, however, a true poet; his poetical gifts added greatly to his ability as a novelist; nor is it possible to understand and appreciate his novels to the full without some knowledge of his poems.

The other great late-Victorian novelist, **Thomas Hardy** (1840–1928), was also a considerable poet, though

he did not publish any poetry until his career as a novelist was over. His *Wessex Poems*, written from 1865 onwards, was published in 1898; *Poems of the Past and the Present* in 1901; *The Dynasts*, an epic-drama, was in three parts, which appeared respectively in 1903, 1906, and 1908. *The Dynasts* is a colossal poem on the Napoleonic war, in nineteen acts and a hundred and thirty scenes. In spite of certain flat passages, almost inevitable in a work planned on that scale, *The Dynasts* is probably the most grandly conceived and titanic dramatic poem of recent years. Hardy's later poems are all lyrical and were published as follows: *Time's Laughing Stocks* (1909), *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), *Moments of Vision* (1917), *Late Lyrics* (1922), *Human Shows* (1925), and *Winter Words* (posthumous, 1928). As a lyric poet Hardy is not always musical, and appears at times not to be master of his medium. He improved greatly in this respect in his later poems, though his technique is sometimes more original than pleasing. The thoughts embodied in his poems are very similar to those found in his novels; irony and tragic power are their strongest features. Hardy was not merely a novelist who wrote poetry in his later years; he is at least as good as a poet as he is as a novelist.

Robert Bridges (1844–1930), the son of a Kentish squire, was educated at Eton and at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he took honours in classics. Afterwards he devoted himself to the study of medicine, and was casualty physician at St. Bartholomew's Hospital for some years. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1913. His writings include *The Growth of Love*; *Prometheus the Firegiver*; *Eros and Psyche*; *Demeter, a Masque*; *October and other Poems*; *New Verse*; and *The Testament of Beauty*. His war-time Anthology, *The Spirit of Man* (1916), was a collection of passages

in prose and verse "designed to bring fortitude and peace of mind to his countrymen", and was deservedly popular. Bridges was an expert prosodist and had to face the prejudice which the British nation feels against an artist who works by any rule other than rule of thumb. He was a mild heretic on the question of spelling, and had a weakness for classical metres, which he used at times with success, but which are naturally alien to the genius of our tongue. He never ceased to experiment with new metrical forms, and the loose Alexandrines in which *The Testament of Beauty* is written are in his hands wonderfully effective. This poem, published on his eighty-fifth birthday, is the best of his long poems, and demonstrated that his mind, in which letters and science blended harmoniously, had lost none of its freshness. It is, however, by some of his shorter lyrics that Bridges won his greatest fame. He had a lofty conception of the art of poetry, and did much by precept and example to raise the standard of poetry among his contemporaries. In all his work there is the quality of high seriousness.

Two slender volumes, separated in their dates by a quarter of a century, won fame for **Alfred Edward Housman** (1859–1936) as a poet. Housman was an extremely able classical scholar, and was professor of Latin first at University College, London, and afterwards at Cambridge. His first little book, *A Shropshire Lad*, was published in 1896, and slowly but steadily won popularity for its author. His second and, as he himself announced, last volume of verse, *Last Poems*, was published in 1922, and was received with an enthusiasm all the more remarkable because Professor Housman never courted popularity. All his poems are clearly expressed in melodious verse, which is finished with the scrupulous care of a scholar. Their finish

attracts lovers of literature, their simplicity and sincerity appeal to everyone.

Rupert Chawner Brooke (1887–1915) was elected to a fellowship at King's College, Cambridge, in 1912. In September, 1914, he joined the Royal Naval Division, took part in the Antwerp expedition, and in February, 1915, sailed for the Dardanelles. He fell ill after a sunstroke at Lemnos and died of blood-poisoning at Scyros on St. George's Day, 1915. His posthumous volumes of poems, *1914 and Other Poems*, published soon after his death, attained extraordinary popularity, voicing as it did the feelings of the young men of 1914, before disillusionment had set in. These poems showed that he had complete mastery over metres of various kinds, and that he might have been among the major poets had he lived. They reveal both an epicurean joy in life and an intense passion, as well as a sense of melancholy at the vanity of human pleasures.

James Elroy Flecker (1884–1915) entered the consular service and went to Constantinople in 1910, but his stay was short, as his health broke down. He was at Beirut from 1911 to 1913, when he was compelled to remove to Switzerland, where he died of consumption a year and a half later. His volumes of verse include *The Bridge of Fire*; *Thirty-Six Poems*; *The Golden Journey to Samarkand*, his best poetical achievement; and *The Old Ships*. Flecker was a fluent and highly original poet; his work was improving steadily at the time of his death, and he might have been a great poet had he lived.

John Masefield (1875–) spent his early life in constant travelling, as a seaman before the mast and at many trades in the United States, but, on the publication of his *Salt-Water Ballads* in 1902, settled down to literary work in England. His realistic narrative poem

The Everlasting Mercy (1911) made him widely known and much talked of. It was followed by *The Widow in the Bye Street*, *Dauber*, *The Daffodil Fields*, *Reynard the Fox*, *Right Royal*, and *Minnie Maylow's Story*. He has also written many dramas, some of which have been performed. Some of his short poems are most charming, and have found a place in every anthology; but his fame will probably endure mainly because of his narrative poems, which are written with great skill and gusto. Successful narrative poems are rare in English literature, and Masefield's are in the direct line of descent from Chaucer's. After the death of Robert Bridges, Masefield was most deservedly made Poet Laureate.

A poet with a curious literary history is **Gerard Manley Hopkins**, who was born in 1844 and died in 1889, but whose poems were not published until 1918. Hopkins was Robert Bridges's closest friend at Oxford, where he graduated with a first class in classics in 1867. Just before doing so he entered the Catholic Church, and a year later became a Jesuit. His remarkable poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland* was written in 1875, after many years' silence imposed by the stringency of his order. It is an extremely difficult and forceful poem, but highly original. Many of his poems he sent to Bridges as he wrote them, and after his death Bridges was his literary executor. Bridges hesitated about publishing the poems in 1890, as they were so unlike what the public was accustomed to, and he feared that they might be neglected or, worse, derided. After including six in his anthology, *The Spirit of Man* (published in 1916), he issued a volume containing the main body of the poems two years later. Hopkins's two most conspicuous features are his liberties with grammar and syntax and his metrical experiments. He reintroduced

the Old English metre — the metre of *Piers Plowman* and many other old poems — and named it "sprung rhythm". Sprung rhythm is a rhythm in which one does not count by syllables but by stresses. So many stresses go to make a line, and it does not matter how long or short the line may be provided all the stresses are there. Hopkins had a touch of genius and could write good poems in this metre, just as he could, with some impunity, take great liberties with the English language; but his admirers, of course, copied all his oddities and wondered why no one admired their work but themselves. His influence upon recent poetry has been great, and not entirely wholesome. Few writers, however, since Elizabethan times, have kept their language as fluid as he has done.

Another poet, two generations younger than Hopkins, but as much imitated and admired by the new school of poetry, is **Thomas Stearns Eliot** (1888–). He was an American by birth, but was educated at the Sorbonne and Oxford as well as Harvard, and is now a naturalized Englishman. He first became known in literary circles after the publication of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* in 1914, and his reputation was enhanced and widened by *The Waste Land* (1922) Other poems have followed these, but have not created quite the same sensation. His play *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) has literary rather than dramatic merit. Eliot's poetry is difficult, and to understand it it is necessary to be able to follow his references to somewhat obscure corners of literature in several languages. In consequence his poetry appeals only to the bookish, and his public is strictly limited He is a master of rhythm, and some of his verse is beautifully musical, even when the meaning eludes us. As a critic Eliot is an austere upholder of discipline; his criticism has been

almost as influential as his poetry. His admirers have, as almost invariably happens, imitated and belauded his less admirable qualities.

Finally we must mention one remarkable poet who belonged to the generation after that of Hopkins and before that of Eliot. **William Butler Yeats** (1865–1939), the son of a well-known Irish artist, wrote many volumes of verse between 1889, when *The Wanderings of Oisin* appeared, and his death half a century later. He also wrote many essays and plays. He was a severe critic of his own work, and in later editions revised many of his earlier poems; his second thoughts were, however, not always best. His later poems are decidedly less ornate than his earlier ones, a change on the whole for the better. In fact his earlier poems belong to the Literature of Escape, while his later poems are realistic and disillusioned. No poet so clearly bridges the gap between the poetry of the 'nineties and the poetry of to-day as Yeats; and he is perhaps the most suitable poet to mention at the conclusion of this sketch, because, like the Roman god Janus, he has one face turned to the Past, and another face turned to the Future. In his combination of beauty, music, and realism Yeats in his later poems is unique.

CHAPTER IX

PROSE, NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was not only a poet; he was also a critic, a philosopher, and a political writer. He did not claim to be the author of a new and original system of philosophy, his system, as he wrote himself, being "an attempt to reduce all knowledge to harmony — to unite the separated fragments of the mirror truth". As a political writer, Coleridge belonged to the school of Burke. As a critic, especially of Shakespeare, Coleridge's work is of the highest rank, combining a comprehensive grasp of large critical principles and a singularly subtle insight into details. He was the earliest and one of the best of æsthetic critics. His prose works include: *Biographia Literaria*, an ill-arranged and indigestible but valuable book of literary criticism, the perusal of which is almost essential for a correct appreciation of his and Wordsworth's poetry; *The Friend*; *The Statesman's Manual*; *Aids to Reflection*; and *On the Constitution of Church and State*. All his writings bear evidence of his great intellectual powers, as well as of his inability to concentrate them.

While at Christ's Hospital Coleridge formed an enduring friendship with **Charles Lamb** ([illegible]), who was more than two years his junior. Lamb, the son of a barrister's clerk, became a clerk in the accountant's office of the India House at the age of seventeen, remaining there for thirty-three years. In [illegible] occurred the terrible family tragedy which was destined to [illegible]

the whole of Lamb's life. There was a certain amount of mental instability in the Lamb family, inherited from their mother. Mary Lamb, who was ten years older than her brother Charles, in a fit of acute mania stabbed her mother to the heart. Lamb at once assumed full responsibility for the custody of his sister, instead of allowing her to be sent for life to a public asylum, and devoted the whole of his life to caring for her. At intervals her mental disease became acute, and she had to be confined, but as a rule the brother and sister lived together, changing their lodging frequently when the nature of Mary's malady became known.

Lamb wrote some poems of a slight but charming nature, and one or two indifferent plays; in 1807 he and his sister combined to write their *Tales from Shakspeare*. Mary was responsible for the comedies and Charles for the tragedies. Lamb also wrote *The Adventures of Ulysses*, based upon Chapman's translation of Homer.

It was not until 1820, however, that Lamb began to write the series of essays which made his reputation as an essayist and humorist. His reputation as a critic had already been made in 1808 by his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, a selection of choice passages from his favourite Elizabethans, illuminated by brief notes which display a rare insight, and which are couched in felicitous language. *The Essays of Elia* were originally contributed to *The London Magazine*, the first appearing in August, 1820. Lamb took the name of "Elia" from a foreigner of that name who had been his fellow-clerk. A collected edition of the essays was published in 1823; the series ceased to appear in *The London Magazine* in 1825, and *The Last Essays of Elia*, a second collection, was published in 1833. Early in 1825 Lamb retired from the India House with an ample pension. He was deeply

affected by the death of Coleridge in the summer of 1834, and died himself five months later.

Lamb is one of the best loved of English men of letters. His quaint humour, his tenderness, his devotion to his sister, and his loyalty to his friends set him in a place apart. His style is very closely modelled on that of certain seventeenth-century writers, especially Robert Burton and Sir Thomas Browne; but he wrote naturally in this way, which would have been affectation in any other writer. As a critic Lamb was a pioneer, and still remains unrivalled for his terse criticisms of the Elizabethans. But he is chiefly loved for himself, something in the way in which a personal friend is loved. He has revealed most completely and most modestly his own charming personality, and his essays are read more on account of that revelation than because of their style, their wisdom, or even their humour.

Coleridge's and Lamb's irascible friend **William Hazlitt** (1778–1830) was also a notable essay writer. He was the son of a Unitarian minister, and, after a brief career as a portrait-painter, took to literature as a profession. His domestic life was not happy, and he was constantly engaged in quarrelling with literary and political enemies. His chief works are: *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, *A Review of the English Stage*, *Lectures on the English Poets*, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, *Table Talk*, *The Spirit of the Age*, and *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*.

Hazlitt was an accomplished essayist, and possessed a beautiful and lucid style. As a critic of Shakespeare he stands extremely high. He had not Coleridge's flashes of inspiration, but he is far more reliable than Coleridge. He is nearly always sound and sensible; like Shakespeare himself, he was wise rather than learned. Some of his criticisms which seem common-

place and orthodox to-day, were daring and original when they were first uttered. His lectures on the English Comic Writers are less good; in many cases he seems to have got up his subject for the occasion and not to have meditated upon it sufficiently. *The Spirit of the Age* is one of Hazlitt's best books. It is written with great animation and is in a beautiful style. Hazlitt's *Life of Napoleon* was a very large piece of work intended to be a counterblast to the biography by Scott. It was not a success. Hazlitt was an enthusiastic Radical all his life, or rather he considered himself to be one. Actually he retained unchanged all the opinions he had formed as a young man, and did not move with the times. All those who did progress he considered to be as dishonest and traitorous as the Tories themselves. He liked to be in a minority of one. As he was also of a very sensitive disposition, it is not to be wondered at that he quarrelled with many of his friends. In his literary tastes Hazlitt was a confirmed Tory. He liked the old writers — Shakespeare, Milton and Fielding were among his favourites — and he only admitted Scott grudgingly to a place in his affections. He read little after he was thirty, and was always unwilling to break new ground. As a critic he was hampered by no theories; his criticism was always refreshingly subjective, sometimes wrong-headed but never insincere. In his younger days he was a keen fives player and an enthusiastic supporter of the ring. He was also a good walker; he had an artist's appreciation of a beautiful picture; he was an ardent theatregoer. His zest for life and his fine style have won him a place among the first of English essayists. In spite of his many misfortunes and their warping effect on his nature, his last words were, "Well, I've had a happy life". Much of his happiness he has passed on to posterity.

Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859), the son of a prosperous linen-merchant, was educated at Manchester Grammar School and at Worcester College, Oxford, where he resided for six years but did not graduate. When he was but nineteen years of age, when suffering from severe neuralgic pains, he began to take opium, a habit which affected the whole course of his life and work. In 1807 he became friendly with Coleridge and Wordsworth, and in 1809 settled in a cottage in Westmoreland. In 1819 he became editor of the *Westmoreland Gazette*, and carried out this task for almost a year. The loss of some of his patrimony and the ill-management of the remainder drove him more and more to look to journalism for a livelihood. His best-known work, *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, appeared in *The London Magazine* in 1821 and in book form in the following year. He moved to London, and became acquainted with Lamb and Hazlitt. *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts* appeared in *Blackwood* in 1827. From 1828 to 1840 he lived in Edinburgh. His industry as a journalist was incredible, considering his unbusinesslike habits and his bondage to opium. In 1840 he removed with his family to Lasswade, which continued to be his headquarters; he had a habit of taking lodgings, in order to get away from the disturbances of his family, and then accumulating books and papers until his rooms were uninhabitable, when he locked the door and went elsewhere. In 1844 he had a final and more or less successful struggle with the opium habit, reducing his ration to six grains a day; at one time it had been three hundred and forty grains. He died in 1859.

De Quincey's numerous virtues have won him many admirers. He was a master of impassioned prose, and endeavoured to form his style upon certain seventeenth-century writers, especially Sir Thomas Browne and

Jeremy Taylor. As a scholar he was both accurate and encyclopædic; he had an abundance of curious information and a taste for minute scholarship. Though quite unable to manage money or any of the ordinary affairs of life, he was no mere dreamer, but had a curious insight into contemporary affairs, and into the hearts of ordinary men and women, an insight which he gained by his habit of conversing with everyone as if they were his equals in every respect. His faults as a writer, however, have alienated many readers. He is desultory and discursive; his style too easily becomes a rigmarole; his attempts at humour are forced and cheap. He ranks, nevertheless, as a master of ornate writing; no one else has written prose which is to the same extent " such stuff as dreams are made on ".

James Henry Leigh Hunt (1784–1859) was educated at Christ's Hospital, where he just missed meeting Lamb and Coleridge. He started *The Examiner* newspaper in 1808, and four years later was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for libelling the Prince Regent. Other periodicals which he started were *The Indicator* and *The Liberal.* To all of these papers he contributed many excellent essays on every possible kind of subject. His admirable *Autobiography* appeared nine years before his death, which took place in 1859. His prose is always excellent of its kind, though its kind is too light to suit some tastes. As a critic he did much to interest the ordinary man in good books. Universality of interest was his strong point, not scholarship. In his innumerable journalistic ventures he did more than any man of his day to raise the standard of contemporary journalism. He has won a place in literary history not merely through his friendship with Shelley, Keats, and Byron, but on account of his valuable though not spectacular services to letters.

Another noted journalist of this period was **William Cobbett** (1762–1835), the son of a farmer; after reaching the rank of sergeant-major in the 54th Foot, he had an active career as a journalist in England and in the United States. His *Weekly Political Register* had a large circulation, and became known as the most daring and uncompromising of the Government's opponents. In about 1819 he commenced a series of papers entitled *Rural Rides*, collected in 1830, which contain charming pictures of English country scenery, and are among the best of his writings, which also include *Advice to Young Men* and *Village Sermons*. He wrote in a pure and vigorous English style, and his writings contain much useful information, and show a sound judgment wherever the matter did not go beyond his strong practical sense. He was a great pioneer journalist, often, indeed usually, wrong-headed, but always perfectly sincere and disinterested.

Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864), the son of a medical practitioner, was educated at Rugby, [illegible] which he was removed on account of a [illegible] dispute with the headmaster about the merits of [illegible] Latin verses, and at Trinity College, Oxford, [illegible] which he was rusticated for firing a gun at [illegible] of a Tory fellow-student. He succeeded [illegible] property at the age of thirty, and resided [illegible] Bath, becoming an intimate friend of [illegible] bought an estate; quarrelled with [illegible] and finally with his wife; and lived [illegible] His best work, *Imaginary* [illegible] 1824, 1826, 1828, 1829 and [illegible] of conversations was one [illegible] of his long life was spent at [illegible] long poems have lost [illegible] possessed; but some of [illegible]

as many of the poems in the Greek Anthology, which they resemble. As a writer of prose his position is even higher. To some readers *Imaginary Conversations* may appear heavy; there is, certainly, too much stiffness in some of them, the effect being that of statues, not human beings, conversing. What was more fatal, their author had no sense of humour. But they are models of pure and vigorous English, grandly conceived and written in the grand style.

Sydney Smith (1771–1845), the son of an eccentric man of independent means, was educated at Winchester and at New College, Oxford, took holy orders, and held several small ecclesiastical appointments. For many years he was parson in an out-of-the-way living in Yorkshire; his liberal views on politics excluded him for a long time from preferment, but in 1831 he became a canon of St. Paul's and resided in London. He was one of the founders, in 1802, of *The Edinburgh Review*, being also one of its most influential contributors. In 1807 appeared anonymously his celebrated *Letters of Peter Plymley*, intended to further the cause of Catholic emancipation. Smith was renowned as a wit; his reputation indeed rested upon his conversation more than upon his writings; it became customary to father upon him every floating witticism, many of which were not worthy of him. His wit still lives in his pages; in some of his best writings he is not unlike a kindlier but less powerful Swift. He was no mere jester, but a wise and fearless champion of what he believed to be right, using wit as his weapon.

The writings of **Charles Robert Darwin** (1809–1882) are read for their subject-matter, not for their style; but all the same they rank among the more important prose writings of the nineteenth century. Darwin, whose father was a well-known physician, was

educated at Shrewsbury and at Christ's College, Cambridge. In 1831 he was appointed naturalist to the surveying voyage of the *Beagle*, and was away for almost five years, having circumnavigated the globe. On his return he settled down as a quiet country gentleman, engrossed in scientific pursuits — experimenting, observing, recording, reflecting, and generalizing. His health, unfortunately, was weak, and he was obliged to live the life of a recluse, to husband his strength, and to limit his working hours in order to avoid being unable to work at all. His earlier works include *A Naturalist's Voyage round the World* and *The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs*. In 1859 his name attained its great celebrity by the publication of *The Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection*. This work, scouted and derided though it was in certain quarters, effected a revolution not only in biological science but in scientific thought of every kind. The rest of his works are largely based on the material he had accumulated for the elaboration of this great theory. The principal are: *On the Fertilization of Orchids*, *The Descent of Man*, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, and *The Formation of Vegetable Mould* Darwin's writings are always clear and as easy reading as their technical nature permits them to be.

Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895), the son of a schoolmaster, graduated in medicine at London University, and was for eight years a surgeon in the navy. He eventually became professor of natural history at the School of Mines, and held many public appointments. Amongst his works are: *Man's Place in Nature*; *Lay Sermons, Addresses and Reviews*; *Critiques and Addresses*; and *Science and Culture*. Huxley would not have been as great a man of science as he was if he had not been much more. He had read widely, and was

master of a lucid and powerful style, so that he was famous not only for his powers of research, but also for his gift of exposition, and his lectures and papers were models of accuracy and clearness. He was "a bonnie fighter" and was the leader of the supporters of the theory of evolution in their combats with men such as Wilberforce and Gladstone.

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), the son of James Mill the philosopher, was educated by his father on a system of his own, which made him an unnaturally precocious youth. He obtained a clerkship in the East India House at the age of seventeen, remaining in the Company's employment until it was supplanted by the Crown in 1858. He was an early contributor to the *Westminster Review*, and for five years was the principal conductor of the *London Review*. Among his works are: *On Liberty*, *Utilitarianism*, *Considerations on Representative Government*, and *The Subjection of Women*. Mill was a man of the utmost sincerity, and in all his writings showed that he had the welfare of mankind at heart. His style is clear and lucid, but not very attractive.

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) was the son of Zachary Macaulay, a well-known philanthropist of his day, and was educated at a private school and at Trinity College, Cambridge, of which he became a fellow. He was a most precocious child, but his parents wisely refrained from treating him as a prodigy, and he retained through life the belief that all schoolboys were as omniscient as he himself had been at an early age. Before he was twenty-five years of age, his article on *Milton* in the *Edinburgh Review* raised him, at a single blow, to literary, political, and social fame. He entered Parliament, and in 1834 proceeded to Calcutta as legal member of the Supreme Council of India. In this

The merits and faults of his *Essays* are much the same as those of his *History*. It should be remembered that he himself considered his essays as essentially short-lived productions, and only consented to collect and republish them because a pirated edition had appeared in America. In spite of their journalistic nature, they have been elaborately dissected and attacked by specialists, who have found but little amiss with them; they have now attained the position of classics. The biography of Macaulay by his nephew, Sir George Trevelyan, is excelled, among British biographies, only by Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and Lockhart's *Life of Scott*.

Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), the son of a stonemason, was educated at Annan Academy and Edinburgh University, and, after giving up the idea of entering the Church and of being called to the Bar, supported himself by teaching and by literary work. His first literary productions were short biographies and other articles for the *Edinburgh Encylopedia*. His career as an author may be said to have begun with the issue of his *Life of Schiller* in the *London Magazine* in 1823. He translated many romances from the German. After his marriage he withdrew to Craigenputtock, a farm in Dumfriesshire, where he wrote a number of critical and biographical articles for various periodicals, and his first characteristic book, *Sartor Resartus*, which appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* between November, 1833, and August, 1834. It is written in his own idiom, forming in this respect a strong contrast to his earlier works, which are written in English more or less of the eighteenth-century pattern. It has great charms for those who can digest it, and has been one of the most popular and influential of his writings. In 1834 Carlyle removed to Chelsea, where he spent the rest of his long life. His next work of importance was *The French Revolution*, published in

1837. Its publication was delayed because, while it was entrusted to John Stuart Mill, a servant-girl accidentally destroyed the manuscript of the first volume, and Carlyle had to undertake the heart-breaking task of rewriting it. *The French Revolution* is a peculiarly vivid and striking piece of historical writing, and is probably his best work. It brought him something approaching popularity. About this time, and in one or two subsequent years, he delivered several series of lectures, the most important of these, *On Heroes and Hero-worship*, being published in 1841. *Chartism* and *Past and Present* were small works bearing more or less on the affairs of the time. In 1845 appeared his *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, a work of great research, and brilliantly successful in vindicating the character of the great Protector. He wrote *Latter-day Pamphlets* in 1850, and a *Life* of his friend John Sterling in 1851. The largest and most laborious work of his life, *The History of Frederick the Great*, appeared in six volumes between 1858 and 1865, and after that little came from his pen, save articles or letters on topics of the day, including *Shooting Niagara; and After?* in which he gave vent to his serious misgivings as to the result of the Reform Bill of 1867. He died in 1881.

Carlyle was by far the greatest moral force in English literature for well-nigh half a century. It is not quite easy to understand why. He had no system of philosophy; many of his doctrines were inconsistent and mutually destructive. He alienated the materialist by his insistence on the spiritual value of everything, and by emphasizing the worthlessness of materialistic doctrine; he alienated the orthodox by the heterodoxy of his views, the Tory by his radicalism, the Radical by his faint foreshadowings of the doctrine of the Superman, and almost all readers by his perplexing and

extraordinary style. His style, indeed, is one of the most curious euphuistic jargons in literature; it says much for the innate force of the man that he was able to find readers who were not deterred by initial difficulties, amounting almost to learning a new language. He was, it appears, not so much a guide as a stimulus; he roused his contemporaries even when he irritated them. As an historian he stands in a high class by himself; he wrote history always with an eye on the present, believing that the problems of the past shed a valuable light on the problems of the day. History can be written in this way; but Carlyle perhaps brings this theory too much into the foreground of his work. It is not out of place in the background. He had undoubtedly a great gift of stripping the trappings off every subject he handled, and getting at the essential truth.

John Henry Newman (1801–1890), the son of a banker of Dutch extraction, was educated at a private school at Ealing and at Trinity College, Oxford. He became a college don, and was a leader in the propaganda of the High Church doctrines, and contributed largely to the celebrated *Tracts for the Times*. Eventually, at the age of forty-four, he entered the Church of Rome, and became in turn head of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri at Birmingham, rector of the Roman Catholic University of Dublin, and principal of the Roman Catholic School at Edgbaston. He was made a cardinal by Leo XIII, and spent the rest of his life quietly at Edgbaston, where he died in 1890.

In 1864 Charles Kingsley gratuitously insulted Newman in a magazine article; Newman protested vigorously; Kingsley refused either to retract or to substantiate his charge; and Newman retaliated with crushing effect in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, probably the best spiritual autobiography of the century. Kings-

ley was, perhaps, too biased to realize how completely he had been defeated. Newman's book rehabilitated his character and won him the sympathy of almost all his fellow-countrymen, irrespective of their religious opinions. Much of Newman's work is too controversial to rank as literature, and makes little appeal to the general reader. He was, however, a master of a lucid prose style, a style which appears easy until an attempt is made to imitate it. It is seen at its best in his altogether admirable *Apologia* and in *The Idea of a University*, the chief outcome of the not very profitable four years which he spent in Dublin.

John Ruskin (1819–1900), the only child of a wealthy wine-merchant, was educated privately and at Christ Church, Oxford. His *Modern Painters* appeared in five volumes between 1843 and 1860. This book began by being a passionate defence of Turner's art, but became more and more discursive in its later volumes, and ended by being a sort of encyclopedia of art criticism. It was received with great enthusiasm, mainly owing to the beauty of its descriptive passages. In 1849 *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* was published; and what must rank as on the whole Ruskin's greatest book, *The Stones of Venice*, appeared in three volumes between 1851 and 1853, with numerous illustrations by the author. Two small manuals, *The Elements of Drawing* and *The Elements of Perspective*, appeared in 1856 and 1859 respectively. The conclusion of *Modern Painters* marked an era in Ruskin's life. From about 1857 his interests extended from art to what he considered a kindred subject, economics, *The Political Economy of Art*, two lectures delivered at Manchester, was printed in 1857, and in 1859 appeared *The Two Paths*, lectures on art and its application to decoration and manufacture. *Unto this Last* (1862) began to appear in the *Cornhill*,

but the papers caused such an uproar that they were discontinued by order of the editor, Thackeray. *Munera Pulveris* suffered the same fate in *Fraser's*. A wave of unpopularity seemed likely to submerge Ruskin, but in 1865 he issued one of his most popular books, *Sesame and Lilies*, lectures on books and on the sphere of women. *The Ethics of the Dust*, lectures on crystals, and *The Crown of Wild Olive*, lectures on work, traffic, and war, both appeared in 1866. *Time and Tide, by Weare and Tyne*, twenty-five letters to a working-man of Sunderland on the laws of work, was published in 1868. A somewhat fanciful study of Greek myths, *The Queen of the Air*, was published in 1869. One of the most interesting and influential of his writings, *Fors Clavigera*, a monthly letter to workmen and labourers of Great Britain, appeared at intervals between 1871 and 1884. From 1884 onwards Ruskin lived a life of great seclusion at Brantwood, Coniston Lake. His extremely interesting though incomplete autobiography *Præterita* appeared at intervals between 1885 and 1889. It was the last of his writings. He died in 1900.

Ruskin was one of the greatest teachers of his generation. He taught men to see what was beautiful, and was a force making for righteousness in a drab and utilitarian age. His teaching performed miracles; he made the blind see and the deaf hear. It is not to be wondered at that his contemporaries regarded him as one of the prophets, nor is it extraordinary that nowadays, when many of his most daring utterances on art and economics have become commonplaces, he has lost much of his authority. He wrote too much, and attempted too many kinds of writing. He is diffuse, and, in the opinion of some, too gorgeous in his style, which, however, entitles him to rank among the great masters of English prose. He learnt to write by means of study-

ing the Bible and Hooker, but his style is entirely his own. Eloquence, force, and subtle analysis are its prevailing characteristics, while his works are permeated with a lofty enthusiasm for truth and beauty, and with a generous sympathy for the poor and weak. He gave the impulse to a not unimportant renascence in British art, though the new birth is, in many respects, very different from the ideal he held up. Scarcely less may be said of his work in political and social economy.

Matthew Arnold's (1822–1888) prose writings are as important as his poetry. His lectures *On Translating Homer* are far more important as a critical manifesto than their title indicates. *Essays in Criticism* (1865) marked an epoch in the history of English criticism, stressing, as it did, the importance of a wide, not an insular point of view. His other writings include *Culture and Anarchy*, *Friendship's Garland*, *Mixed Essays*, and a series of semi-theological works, which fluttered the orthodox at the time of their appearance, but are not much read nowadays. Arnold's prose style, which is seen at its best in his purely literary essays, is inimitably clear and graceful, and he introduced into criticism an urbanity and a vivacity which before his time had been sadly wanting.

Another notable literary critic was **Walter Pater** (1839–1894), an Oxford don. He was a slow and fastidious writer, and his first book, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, did not appear until 1873, though many of the essays which it contains had been previously published in periodicals. In 1885, twelve years after the publication of his first book, his second book, *Marius the Epicurean*, appeared. It is a philosophical romance of the time of Marcus Aurelius, and is on the whole his best work. *Imaginary Portraits* appeared in 1887, *Appreciations* in 1889, and *Plato and Platonism*

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in 1893, the year before Pater's death. Pater lived a life somewhat apart from that of other men, and his style, though beautiful, is somewhat precious and overlaboured. He had art in abundance, but not the art which conceals art. He was much imitated by several of his younger contemporaries, and founded a new but short-lived form of euphuism. Even in his own hands this style is not always a success; in those of his imitators it is almost invariably a failure.

More recent prose writers of distinction are too numerous to mention, though time alone will show how much of their work will survive. One or two writers of more than ordinary merit may be briefly referred to before ending this chapter. **Gilbert Keith Chesterton** (1874–1936) was educated at St. Paul's School, and studied art at the Slade School. Afterwards he worked in a publisher's office, reviewing at the same time books for the *Speaker* and the *Bookman*. In 1900 he definitely took up literature as a profession, and contributed regularly to a dozen newspapers and periodicals. His very numerous works include: *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, *The Club of Queer Trades*, *The Man who was Thursday*, *The Innocence of Father Brown*, *The Flying Inn*, *Tales of the Long Bow*, and many others. Unconventional in appearance, style, and ideas, Chesterton was a master of paradox and a brilliant satirist. He early attracted attention by his piquant style, and gained a high reputation in English letters. He undoubtedly wrote too much, and his paradoxes developed into a somewhat exasperating trick; but time will winnow the chaff from the grain, and much of what he wrote will probably be read in the twenty-first century.

Joseph Hilaire Pierre Belloc (1870–), the son of a French barrister and an English mother, was educated at the Oratory School, Birmingham, and served

as a driver in the French artillery before going up to Balliol College, Oxford, where he was Brackenbury History Scholar and took a first class in the History Schools. It would almost be easier to catalogue the subjects he has not written about than those which he has treated; his work ranges from nonsense verse for children to weighty writings on historical subjects. Like all good nonsense verse for children, Belloc's appeals to grown-ups as well; his nonsense is often more illuminating than other people's sense. Among his works are: *The Path to Rome*, *Caliban's Guide to Letters*, *The French Revolution*, *The Four Men*, *The Servile State*, *The Mercy of Allen*, and *The Cruise of the "Nona"*. His style is that of a master, and combines lucidity and vigour in the right proportions. Much of his historical writing is marred to a greater or less extent by his prejudices; but he is a scholar with an encyclopedic mind, and the greatest prose writer of his day. Much of his work will undoubtedly live.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (1863–1944), known as a novelist as "Q", wrote many novels and romances of some merit before he was appointed King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at Cambridge in 1912. His experiences as a literary craftsman, his wide reading, and his shrewd humour imparted a unique flavour to his lectures, which, when published, became widely and most deservedly popular. Among these published lectures are: *On the Art of Writing*, *On the Art of Reading*, *Shakespeare's Workmanship*, *Charles Dickens and other Victorians*, and three series of *Studies in Literature*. Quiller-Couch's enthusiasm for every thing that is good in literature was absolutely devoid of pomposity, and his style is admirably graceful and vivacious.

The elegant and witty little books of Max

(1872–) will in all probability outlive many writings of heavier metal. He was educated at Charterhouse and Merton College, Oxford; and his works (if such a word can be applied to his writings) include *Zuleika Dobson*, *A Christmas Garland*, *Yet Again*, *And Even Now*, and *Seven Men*. He is a fastidious writer, always charming and witty; and he has acute powers of criticism.

Finally, just at the conclusion of the 1914–18 war, **Giles Lytton Strachey** (1880–1932), a Trinity College, Cambridge, man, attracted widespread attention with his *Eminent Victorians*, short studies of Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold, and General Gordon, in which the clay feet of these popular idols were exposed to view. Strachey was credited with having originated a new method of writing biography, though as a matter of fact his ironical style, which was one of his chief charms, was borrowed directly from Gibbon. Encouraged by his success, Strachey went on to devote a book to *Queen Victoria*; his intention was to make game of his subject, but he found as he studied the queen's life that she was a greater woman than he had supposed, and the book lacked the pyrotechnics of its predecessor and to some extent missed fire. In *Elizabeth and Essex* Strachey was not treading on familiar ground, and the book was a failure. *Books and Characters*, *Portraits in Miniature*, and *Characters and Commentaries* are collections of essays of a charming but essentially trivial nature. The Stracheyan method of biography-writing found many imitators, most of whom are already deservedly forgotten. *Eminent Victorians* and *Queen Victoria* will, however, probably survive on account of their liveliness and the attractive malice of their style.

CHAPTER X

DRAMA, NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

Sheridan wrote his last play of any importance, *The Critic*, in 1779; for close on a hundred years from that date English drama fell into a state of ineptitude which is as unaccountable as it is deplorable. Two or three great poets, certainly, wrote plays which are still remembered, but they were not popular successes. **Shelley's** *The Cenci* (1819) is perhaps the greatest non-Elizabethan tragedy in English, but, though its author intended it for the stage and had the celebrated actress Eliza O'Neill in his mind when he drew Beatrice Cenci, the play was quite unsuitable for public performance. **Browning's** plays *Strafford* (1837) and *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843) are both good plays, but were not well acted and met with no striking success. **Tennyson** wrote seven plays in all — *Queen Mary*, *Harold*, *The Promise of May*, *The Cup*, *The Falcon*, *Becket*, and *The Foresters*. *The Promise of May* is the only one of these which can truly be called poor stuff; there is much noble writing in the historical plays; but the stage was not Tennyson's medium and his plays are weak on the dramatic side. *Becket*, thanks to Irving's acting, had some success on the stage. Tennyson's failure on the stage, which he was slow to recognize, was certainly not due to indolence on his part, for he took infinite pains over his plays, as over all his work. He had simply entered a province of literature in which his genius was not at home

The first signs of improvement in the popular stage appeared in the plays of **Thomas William Robertson**

(1829–1871), who was descended from actors on both sides, and who went on the stage himself as a child. He was not a success as an actor, and for a time acted as prompter at the Olympic, and struggled to make a livelihood by means of light literature. In 1864 he had considerable success with *David Garrick*, a play produced by Sothern; but his fame rests on a series of plays produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, including *Society*, *Ours*, *Caste*, *Play*, *School*, and *M.P.* Though sneered at by certain critics at the time of their production, and nicknamed "cup-and-saucer dramas" because they attempted to represent life as it really was, they were distinctly above the level of contemporary drama, being far less stagey and unnatural than any earlier plays of the nineteenth century. *Caste* in particular, though an old-fashioned play to read, is still an excellent play to see performed. Robertson was a master of stagecraft, and had a hearty and altogether wholesome sense of humour. It was a misfortune for the British stage that, just as his art was maturing and his merits were beginning to be recognized, he died at the early age of forty-two.

A friend of Robertson's and a unique figure in the history of the Victorian stage was **William Schwenck Gilbert** (1836–1911). The son of an eccentric novelist, he graduated at London University, entered the Civil Service for four years, and was called to the Bar, where, however, he failed to attract clients. He supported himself by means of journalism, contributing to the pages of *Fun* the famous series of comic poems known as *The Bab Ballads*, which he illustrated himself in a characteristic style. He began to write for the stage in 1866, and wrote many plays — burlesques, fairy plays, and more serious dramas — most of which are now completely and not undeservedly forgotten. His genius lay in writ-

ing the libretti of light operas, and he has won immortality for himself by means of the series of operas of this kind for which Sir Arthur Sullivan wrote the music. *Thespis* (1871), a tentative effort, was followed by *Trial by Jury* (1875), a one-act short "dramatic cantata"; the great series of operas may be said to have begun with *The Sorcerer* in 1877; *Pinafore*, produced in the following year, was the first sensational success, and was received in America with an "enthusiasm bordering upon insanity". It was followed by *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Patience*, *Iolanthe*, *Princess Ida*, *The Mikado*, *Ruddigore*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, and *The Gondoliers*. An unfortunate quarrel between the collaborators then occurred; two operas were written after the cessation of hostilities, but *Utopia, Limited*, though excellent, is not equal to the best of the series, while *The Grand Duke* is little better than a fiasco. A more perfect partnership than that of Gilbert and Sullivan never existed, and the Savoy operas (as they are called from the theatre at which, from *Iolanthe* onwards, they were first produced) are unique in every way. Gilbert had a marvellous mastery over comic metre, and invented many new metrical forms His words set themselves to music. His plots, though fantastic, are always coherent, and a curious strain of inverted logic runs through all his work. Like Robertson, he was a master of stagecraft, he was his own stage manager, and usually got his own way at rehearsals, as he handled his cast somewhat like a sergeant-major on parade.

Henry Arthur Jones (1851–1929), the son of a Buckinghamshire farmer, produced his first play in 1878, though it was not till 1882 that he attracted attention with his melodrama *The Silver King*, not the most ambitious but in many respects the best of his

plays. He wrote in all upwards of forty plays, of which the best known are: *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, *Michael and his Lost Angel*, *The Liars*, *Mrs. Dane's Defence*, *Whitewashing Julia*, and *The Hypocrites*. He held the view that the stage was destined to succeed the pulpit as an instructor in morality; but, though his plays are effective on the stage, his literary gifts were by no means great, and his mind was essentially commonplace. His plays, accordingly, were not nearly so important as he intended them to be; and to-day they have been pushed out of the way by the work of younger and abler men.

Sir Arthur Wing Pinero (1859–1934), the son of a Jewish solicitor of Portuguese extraction, became an actor at the age of nineteen, and was so employed for seven years. He commenced his career as a dramatist by writing *£200 a Year* (1877). His earlier plays were for the most part farces: *The Magistrate*, *The Schoolmistress*, *Dandy Dick*, and others. His early serious plays were *The Squire* and *The Profligate*. The former owed its popularity in part to its rural setting, and the latter secured a masterly third act by means of sacrificing probability and abusing coincidence. *Sweet Lavender*, a sentimental comedy, was extremely successful and has been frequently revived. *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (1893) was Pinero's most ambitious play; in it he imitated the dramas of Ibsen, but he had not the inspiration nor the width of vision of the Norwegian dramatist, and the play is not now important on its own account. It is important because it allows us to see what was considered to be important on the British stage in 1893. Among Pinero's later plays are *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, *The Gay Lord Quex*, and *His House in Order*. The best of his plays is probably *Trelawny of the Wells*, which deals with the English stage in the

'sixties, a subject in which Pinero was thoroughly at home. Pinero's plots are ingenious pieces of mechanism, but his characters often talk in a way in which no human beings ever talked, except on the stage.

Literary grace and finish returned to the stage in the four comedies of **Oscar Wilde** (1856–1900), the son of a celebrated Dublin oculist and an erratic literary woman, a brilliant graduate of Oxford, and one of the leaders of the æsthetic movement. His four plays are *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of no Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of being Earnest*. In the first three of these Wilde wrote with his tongue in his cheek, and with a scarcely-veiled contempt for his audience; they are saved from oblivion mainly by the brilliant epigrams which they contain. *The Importance of being Earnest* is a sheer piece of tomfoolery, unequalled in its own way, and adding no small contribution to the gaiety of nations.

Harley Granville-Barker (1877–   ) is a dramatist who has hardly fulfilled the high expectations which were aroused by his early work. *The Marrying of Ann Leete*, *The Voysey Inheritance*, *Waste*, and *The Madras House* were plays of great promise, especially the last-named, but Mr. Barker has devoted himself to the translation, adaptation, and production of Spanish, French, and German plays, and to the writing of some extremely valuable Shakespearean criticism; his original work for the stage ceased while he was still a young man.

John Galsworthy (1867–1933), better known as a novelist, wrote a number of plays which display a strong sense of the theatre and an earnest sympathy with victims of social injustice, but which are lacking in the essential qualities of greatness. They include *The Silver Box*, *Joy*, *Strife*, *Justice*, *The Pigeon*, *The* [illegible]

Game, and *Loyalties*. Galsworthy was careful to avoid all theatricality in his dialogue, which, when read or when spoken by an indifferent actor, is apt to seem somewhat bald. His plots, however, have the appearance of having been specially designed to prove some theory or illustrate some view; so that his natural dialogue does not save his plays from having an air of artificiality. In spite of that, it is possible that two or three of them will survive, not merely on account of their considerable dramatic merits, but because they preserve in a vivid form certain aspects of life in the early twentieth century.

The plays of **St. John Ervine** (1883–) suggest that their author might have pleased his audience more if he had been less anxious to please. *The First Mrs Fraser* and *Anthony and Anne* were extremely popular; but his best play is *John Ferguson*, the scene of which is set in Mr. Ervine's native Ulster. His other plays include *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary* and *Robert's Wife*, in the latter of which an interesting problem is solved by conventional, not to say theatrical, means. There is great power in many of Mr. Ervine's plays, but his performance does not always equal his promise.

The Poet Laureate, **John Masefield** (1875–), has written a number of plays of great beauty, but they are stronger from the literary than from the dramatic point of view. They include *The Tragedy of Nan, The Campden Wonder, The Tragedy of Pompey the Great, The Trial of Jesus, The Coming of Christ*, and *End and Beginning*. Most of these plays were written to be performed privately, so they are not well known to the general public. They are the work of a true poet, though in some of them the author has experimented with a style which is too far removed from that of normal human speech. Unlike Pinero's characters, however, Mr. Masefield's talk like poets, not like actors.

The Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which was leased and rebuilt by Miss Horniman about 1903, gave a notable impetus to the revival of Irish drama. One of the most active directors of this theatre was **Augusta, Lady Gregory** (1852–1932), who wrote many short plays for it herself—*Spreading the News*, *The Rising of the Moon*, *Hyacinth Halvey*, *The Jackdaw*, *The Workhouse Ward*, and many more—delightful trifles, most of them, but not of any great significance in the history of drama. The Abbey Theatre was fortunate in securing the services of the poet **William Butler Yeats** (1865–1939), who wrote many plays for it, *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *The Pot of Broth*, *The King's Threshold*, *Deirdre*, and many others. But the most notable Irish dramatist was **John Millington Synge** (1871–1909), the son of a barrister and a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. Synge thought of adopting music as a profession, but abandoned it for literature in 1894, and spent much of his time in Paris. For some years it seemed likely that he would devote his powers to critical instead of creative writing, but in 1899 Yeats persuaded him to turn his attention to Ireland, especially to the Aran Islands, and it was not long before he began to write plays. *The Shadow of the Glen* was acted in 1903, and the very beautiful and touching *Riders to the Sea* in 1904. *The Tinker's Wedding*, though begun in 1902, was not published until 1907; *The Well of the Saints* was published in 1905, after having been acted in the same year at the Abbey Theatre, to which Synge acted as literary adviser. His most famous play, *The Playboy of the Western World*, was produced in 1907 and, in spite of organized opposition, was generally recognized as a play of capital importance. No sooner had Synge attained fame than he died, a few weeks before his thirty-eighth birthday. His not quite finished three-act

romantic play *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, in the opinion of some his highest achievement, was acted and published in 1910. He was a great master of style, writing in most of his plays an idealization of the dialect of the Irish peasantry—a perilous form, of which, however, he was the complete master. The mixture of tragedy, comedy, and irony in his plays is unique. It is difficult to say how much the stage lost by his early death.

The tradition of the Irish drama has been well maintained by **Sean O'Casey** (1884–), who was educated in the streets of Dublin and began life as a general labourer. Indeed in his plays (*The Shadow of a Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *The Plough and the Stars*, and several others) he has not only maintained that tradition, but has added to it something of his own which he has derived from his hard experience of life.

One of the most original dramatists of his own or any day was **Sir James Matthew Barrie** (1860–1937). He was the son of a Scottish weaver, and was educated at Dumfries Academy and at Edinburgh University, where he graduated M.A. in 1882. After working on the staff of a Nottingham paper he became a journalist in London, and wrote several highly successful series of sketches and some novels before he turned his attention to the stage. His first plays were written without that scrupulous care which he afterwards bestowed upon his art, but *Walker, London* was a decided success; *The Professor's Love Story* was well received; and *The Little Minister*, a dramatization of one of his novels, was equally successful. *The Wedding Guest* was not so popular, but showed more clearly than its predecessors that Barrie had genius and not merely talent. In 1903 he produced no fewer than three plays: *Quality Street*, a delicately-written comedy of perennial charm; *The Admirable Crichton*, one of the best plays he ever wrote;

and *Little Mary*, a *jeu d'esprit* which did not endure. His best-known play, *Peter Pan*, followed in 1904, and has enthralled successive generations of children ever since. It shares with Carroll's *Alice* books the distinction of being the most notable nursery classic of the last hundred years. *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire* in 1905 was followed by the even better *What Every Woman Knows* in 1908. Barrie's short plays are as masterly as his long ones; the best of them, perhaps, is *The Twelve-Pound Look*, but *The Will* is also a masterpiece of ironic humour, and *Half an Hour* is a grim triumph of the dramatist's art. *The Adored One* has a capital first act, but the other two acts missed fire; the first act, with slight alterations, eventually became a one-act play, as it had originally been designed to be. In this form it was re-named *Seven Women.* The charming fantasy *A Kiss for Cinderella* appeared during the War years, which gave rise to several characteristic short plays, of which *The Old Lady shows her Medals* is the best. Barrie's masterpiece, *Dear Brutus*, appeared in 1917. It is a typical Barrie play, being humorous, pathetic, grim, and fantastic simultaneously. After the War Barrie wrote *Mary Rose*, one of the most touching of all his plays, and an unfinished thriller called *Shall we join the Ladies?* Not long before his death *The Boy David*, a Biblical play, was produced; but in spite of being elaborately staged and eagerly awaited, it was not a success. Barrie had an uncanny mastery over stage-craft, and when his genius was at its best, he could do almost anything he liked with his audience. Hence, probably, comes some of the adverse criticism on his plays; for people who have been hypnotized are apt, when they come to, to resent the liberty which has been taken with them. Barrie is at his best when he is fantastic, and at his best his art is as delicate as that of Hans

Andersen. He is a master of humour and pathos; the former quality endears him to the judicious, but to the latter he owes his immense popularity.

By far the most prolific and important dramatist of the early and not-so-early twentieth century is **George Bernard Shaw** (1856–). He was born in Dublin and educated at the Wesleyan Connexional School there. He entered a Dublin land-agent's office when he was fifteen, but five years later joined his mother in London and attempted to earn a livelihood by writing. At first he met with scant success, and his five novels only appeared as serials in short-lived magazines with small circulations. After a time, however, he became art and musical critic to the *Star* and the *World*. From 1884 onwards he was an active member of the Fabian Society, and became a practised and inexhaustible orator. His first play, *Widowers' Houses*, was produced in 1892, with slight success. It was followed by *The Philanderers* (1893), *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (banned until 1925), and the very delightful *Arms and the Man*, one of his best plays. *Candida* is a play of great charm, and *You Never can Tell* a slight but most amusing comedy. Even to name all his plays would take up more space than the scheme of this book allows; but a few of his more important plays may be mentioned. *Man and Superman* was at one time considered his masterpiece; but it has not worn so well as some of his other plays, and it is so long that it is usually performed only in a truncated and maimed form. His Irish play *John Bull's Other Island* is first-rate; *Major Barbara*, a play about the Salvation Army, is also good; *Getting Married* is marred perhaps by excessive dialogue and insufficient action, a weakness to which Shaw's volubility made him prone. Few of his plays are more amusing than *Pygmalion*; and *Heartbreak House*, which appeared

during the war of 1914–18, is a typical and admirable play. In *Back to Methuselah*, a cycle of five plays, Shaw seems to have over-estimated the staying-powers of his audience. *St. Joan* was acclaimed as his masterpiece when it appeared; but it is too much of a dramatized debate, and there is more of the quintessence of Shaw in the comparatively neglected *The Apple Cart*. Shaw is a master of witty dialogue, and his best plays have just enough plot to keep them moving. He is so full of ideas that they overflow into long introductions, which are sometimes as witty and as important as the plays they introduce. His influence on British and continental thought has been immense; but he is so witty that, somewhat to his own chagrin, he is often not taken seriously. He has always regarded the stage as a sort of pulpit from which he could disseminate his views to the world in general; his views are serious though his method of expressing them is not. As another equally witty Irishman said, "The theatre, in proper hands, might certainly be made the school of morality; but now, I am sorry to say it, people seem to go there principally for their entertainment". What Posterity will have to say about Mr Shaw is even less certain than the verdict of that oracle about his contemporaries; but it is safe to hazard a guess that it will bracket his name not with that of Karl Marx, but with that of Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

CHAPTER XI

THE NOVEL, FROM DICKENS ONWARDS

Charles Dickens (1812–1870), the son of a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, received a somewhat scanty education, the most valuable part of which he secured for himself by reading Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith, Cervantes, Le Sage, and *The Arabian Nights*. In or about 1823 Dickens's father was imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea, and Dickens was employed as a mere drudge in a blacking warehouse. He was sent back to school again for a while, when family affairs improved, but became a clerk in an attorney's office when he was fifteen. He taught himself to be an excellent writer of shorthand, and turned into a newspaper critic and reporter, travelling up and down the country and learning to write his articles swiftly and in the most unfavourable conditions. In 1835 the first of that series of *Sketches by Boz* appeared which brought Dickens into fame. The collected papers were published early in 1836. In the same year Chapman and Hall engaged the new writer to prepare the letterpress for a series of comic sketches on sporting subjects by Seymour, an artist who had already achieved fame, and suggested that the sketches should represent the adventures of an eccentric club. Seymour committed suicide before the appearance of the second number, and Hablot K. Browne ("Phiz") joined Dickens as illustrator, the result being the immortal *Pickwick Papers*, in some respects the most entertaining of all his books. The great characteristics of Dickens's genius were now fully apparent, and his fame rose at once to the highest

point it was possible for a writer of fiction to reach. In 1837 Dickens was engaged as editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, to which he contributed *Oliver Twist*, a work which opened up that vein of philanthropic pathos and indignant satire upon institutions which became a distinguishing feature of his works. Before the completion of *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* was begun, being issued complete in 1839. As the special object of *Oliver Twist* was to expose the conduct of workhouses, that of *Nicholas Nickleby* was to denounce the management of cheap boarding-schools. *Master Humphrey's Clock*, issued in weekly numbers, contained among other matter two other leading tales, *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*, the former an immensely popular tale in which humour and pathos blend, the latter an historical tale, going back to the time of the Gordon riots in 1780. In 1842 Dickens visited America, and on his return wrote *American Notes for General Circulation*. His next novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, one of the best though one of the worst-constructed of the series, dwelt again on his American experiences. His series of *Christmas Books*, written between 1843 and 1847, excited a new sensation of wonder and delight. The best of them, *A Christmas Carol*, is perhaps the most popular of all his writings. *Dombey and Son* appeared in 1848; it was followed by *David Copperfield* in 1850. *Copperfield* is often acclaimed as his best book (it was his own favourite), perhaps on account of its strong autobiographical element. In 1850 Dickens became editor of the weekly journal *Household Words*, in which various original contributions from his own pen appeared. In 1853 his *Bleak House* came out; it was in the main a satire upon "the law's delays", but is an ill-constructed and rather drab novel. *Hard Times*, a weak story, unfortunately taken as typical of his work by

some continental critics, appeared in *Household Words*, and was published in 1854. *Little Dorrit*, commenced in 1856, dealt with imprisonment for debt, the contrasts of character developed by wealth and poverty, and executive imbecility, idealized in the Circumlocution Office. In 1859, in consequence of a disagreement with his publishers, *All the Year Round* superseded *Household Words*; and in the first number of this periodical was begun *A Tale of Two Cities*, a lurid and serious story based upon a study of Carlyle's *French Revolution*. *Great Expectations*, a most attractive story, followed in the same paper on 1st December, 1860. *Our Mutual Friend*, completed in 1865 and published in the usual monthly numbers, with illustrations by Marcus Stone, was the last great serial work which Dickens lived to finish; it has an elaborate plot and some delightfully-drawn characters. The first number of his last work, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, was issued in April, 1870, and only three numbers had appeared when Dickens died suddenly. He had considerably overtaxed his strength during his later years, especially by his successive series of public readings from his own works. He had written three more parts of *Drood*, but left the tale — a tale of murder and opium — half told.

The popularity of Dickens with the men of his own generation was unprecedented, and his influence was immense. He became a National Institution not merely in his lifetime but in his early manhood. His pathos is perhaps his chief cause of offence to the present generation. When he is pathetic he seems to hit his readers below the intellectual belt. His pathos is closely connected with his love of melodrama. Dickens had a lifelong and intense love for the stage; at one time he proposed to become a professional actor, and he was always an enthusiastic amateur. His love for the theatre,

which had fallen on evil days in his time, adversely affected his novels, yet did not teach him, as it might have done, to write a scenario before putting his hand to a new novel. He never was entirely successful in his management of a plot, and has been surpassed in that respect by many dozens of novelists who were incomparably his inferiors in every other way. In spite of these and other defects, Dickens is undeniably the most popular of British novelists; nor is it hard to account for his popularity. He was one of the quickest and most minute observers who has ever written; his realism of detail gives life in abundance to his idealized characters. What he has effected in the way of idealizing his characters is a miracle of art. Bores and evil-doers, and the mentally deformed of all kinds, become in his pages the most delightful and entertaining companions. But perhaps the greatest of all Dickens's innumerable gifts is the most excellent gift of charity. He loved his fellow-men as few have done, especially all those who were desolate and oppressed. He has created more characters than any British writer, save Shakespeare. He has by the potency of his art called into existence a kind of Fairy-land of his own, which every reader enters with delight and quits with reluctance.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863), whose father was in the service of the East India Company, was born at Calcutta, and educated at Charterhouse and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he did not graduate. He had an independent income of about £500 a year, and was for a time able to follow his inclinations and travel on the Continent to study art. However, he lost almost all his money in some unfortunate speculations and in the failure of an Indian bank, and adopted literature as a profession. He undertook literary work of all kinds. Under the names of George Fitzboodle

Esq., or of Michael Angelo Titmarsh, he contributed to *Fraser's Magazine* tales, criticisms, and verses, which were marked by keen irony and great knowledge of the world. In this magazine *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* appeared, and also *Barry Lyndon.* In 1840 he published *The Paris Sketchbook,* and in 1843 the very much better *Irish Sketchbook.* *Punch* first appeared in 1841, and when it was about eleven months old Thackeray began to write for it, to the great benefit of both the periodical and himself. *Jeames's Diary* and *The Snob Papers* both came out in *Punch*; the latter reappeared in book form as *The Book of Snobs* in 1848. Thackeray did not, however, reach the front rank of living writers until 1847, when *Vanity Fair* was published in monthly parts, with illustrations by the author. This " novel without a hero " is one of the greatest of British novels; its picture of society is admirably faithful. Thackeray's next long story was *The History of Pendennis* (monthly numbers, 1848 to 1850), a novel which has a considerable but indefinite autobiographical element, and which is less well-constructed than its predecessor. His next novel was *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852), which is considered by many critics to be his masterpiece. It is certainly a wonderful historical novel, unequalled in style and in the vividness of its portraits. It is to be noted that it alone of his novels did not appear serially or in numbers; this fact probably does much towards explaining the superior technique of *Esmond.* Its sequel, *The Virginians* (monthly numbers, 1857 to 1859), is, like most sequels, disappointing. *The Newcomes* (monthly numbers, 1853 to 1855) is a somewhat desultory novel of family life, redeemed by the figure of Colonel Newcome and the brilliance of some of its scenes. His remaining novels are: *Lovel the Widower, The Adventures of Philip,* and the fragmentary *Denis*

Denis Duval, left unfinished at his death, which took place on Christmas Eve, 1863. His last three novels, together with a charming series of articles called *Roundabout Papers*, came out in *The Cornhill Magazine*, which he edited from 1859 to 1862.

Thackeray was a giant of a man, being six feet three inches in height. His physique and his Anglo-Indian extraction may have played their share in moulding his attitude towards things in general, which was that all is vanity. He was an acute spectator of the life around him, but was always somewhat aloof from it. But with all his limitations he stands among the greatest of British novelists. It is or was a commonplace of criticism to compare or contrast his work with that of Dickens, but in truth the two great novelists have nothing in common save that they were contemporaries and at the head of their profession. Thackeray is not quite the equal of Fielding, whom he loved and imitated, but he has depicted the society of his time in the most masterly fashion, and has, in addition, made the age of Queen Anne live once more by the magic of his pen. Thackeray's style at its best is well-nigh perfect; the beautiful cadences of his prose make amends for his occasional savageness and choice of sordid subjects and his constant tendency to preach.

Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, first Lord Lytton (1803–1873), was educated at various schools and at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. He published poetry at an early age, but first gained reputation as a dandy and by his novels *Pelham* and *The Disowned*. His output was enormous. It is not possible to record here more than a few of his sixty publications. He posed as an elegant author who wrote with ease, but actually much hard work went to the writing of his books, and he was, as far as in him lay, a conscientious

author. He followed up his early success by writing *Devereux* and *Paul Clifford.* These were followed by the popular romances *Eugene Aram*, *The Pilgrims of the Rhine*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *Rienzi*, and *Ernest Maltravers* with its sequel *Alice.* After writing several highly-successful but shallow plays, he returned to novel-writing, and published in steady succession *Night and Morning*, *Zanoni*, *The Last of the Barons*, *Lucretia*, *Harold*, *The Caxtons*, *My Novel*, and *What will he do with it?*. His later literary works include *The Coming Race*, *The Parisians*, and *Kenelm Chillingly*.

Lytton had a great reputation in his lifetime; it has now almost vanished. He wrote a great deal too much. He watched public taste with great vigilance, and showed admirable versatility in catering for it. His novels are of very varied types — the novel of society, the novel of roguery, the classical novel, the historical romance, the domestic novel, and the occult novel. He succeeded in carrying out works of diverse kinds, never writing supremely well but never incompetently. He would probably have produced more durable work had he written less. His chief faults are insincerity and floridity of phrase. Modern readers probably find most of his novels ponderous and dreary; but half a dozen or so of his extremely varied books will always find some appreciative and even enthusiastic admirers.

Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), the son of a parson, after distinguishing himself at Magdalene College, Cambridge, was himself ordained and was appointed rector of Eversley, Hampshire, where he remained until his death, thirty-one years later. He discharged his multifarious duties with characteristic vigour and energy, and made himself loved and respected throughout his parish. Contemporary events brought him into prominence as a leader of the " Christian Socialists ", and his

first two novels, *Yeast* (1851; it had appeared serially in *Fraser's*) and *Alton Locke*, were written at white-heat to give vent to his views. His extremely able novel *Hypatia* appeared in 1853, after passing through *Fraser's Magazine*. It gives a brilliant picture of life at Alexandria in the beginning of the fifth century A D., and is probably to be regarded as Kingsley's best book. Nearly as good and decidedly more popular was *Westward Ho!* (1855), a delightful picture of Elizabethan England and the Spanish Main. *Two Years Ago* (1857) is a much less successful tale of contemporary life, introducing the Crimean War. Kingsley's charming *Water Babies*, a book for children, appeared in 1863. In 1866 he published the last of his novels, *Hereward the Wake*, an historical romance about the Norman Conquest. His gifts were extremely varied, and he attained excellence in several departments of literature, though supreme excellence was denied him. His poems, not very large in bulk, are almost all good; *Andromeda* is perhaps the only tolerable English poem written in hexameters. *Hypatia* and *Westward Ho!* only just fall short of being extremely great; *The Water Babies* and *The Heroes* are nursery classics. Kingsley was a force in his day, however, far less owing to his gifts as a writer than owing to the manliness, impetuosity, and great-heartedness of his character

Whether George Borrow (1803-1881) should be ranked as a novelist or not is doubtful, but his two remarkable books *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* are perhaps to be ranked as contributions to fiction rather than to autobiography. Borrow was the son of the adjutant of a militia regiment, and led the wandering life not uncommonly led by an officer's children. His education was therefore extremely unconventional He was for a time at the Edinburgh High School and at

Norwich Grammar School, but he picked up most of his learning at odd moments, in strange places, and among odd associates in different parts of the three kingdoms. After a spell in a lawyer's office in Norwich, Borrow became a literary hack in London; but his health broke down and for some months (probably from May to September, 1825) he led the roving existence described with embellishments in his two best books. He became, thanks to his remarkable memory and insatiable curiosity about strange things, an extraordinary though not a profound linguist, mastering not only the more ordinary languages, but such obscure tongues as Romany and Haik. His gift of tongues recommended him to the Bible Society, which employed him as its agent in Russia and in Spain, Portugal, and Morocco. His extremely interesting *The Bible in Spain* was based upon the letters which he wrote to the Society's officials in London. His masterpiece, *Lavengro,* appeared in 1851, and its sequel, *The Romany Rye*, six years later. *The Romany Rye* is not a sequel in the ordinary sense of the word; *Lavengro* was issued separately merely because it filled three volumes, then the conventional size of a book; the two books are virtually one. The publication of the later book was held up by the ill-success of the earlier. Borrow's two books are generally either beloved or detested. His admirers love him for his manliness, his independence, his sturdy common sense, his hatred of humbug; even his personal appearance (he stood six feet three and his hair was white in his youth) is remembered affectionately by them. His detractors cannot get over his vanity, his philological pretensions, the rancour with which he expresses some of his views, and his lapses of style. In his books he has preserved the glamour of England in pre-railway days, when gipsies were un-

touched by Vagrancy and Education Acts. Those who have the good fortune and good taste to like him regard him almost as a personal friend; no author can arouse such a feeling without the possession of rare qualities.

Charles Reade (1814–1884), the son of a country squire, was educated privately and at Magdalen College, Oxford, of which he became vice-president. The theatre had an irresistible attraction for him, and he wrote several highly successful plays (*The Lyons Mail, Nance Oldfield*, and others) of little real value. His novel-writing sprang directly from his first successful play, for *Peg Woffington* is an adaptation of his play *Masks and Faces*. This was followed by *Christie Johnstone* and *It is never too late to mend*, one of his novels with a purpose, in which he attacked the English prison system. His masterpiece, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, dealing with the lives of the parents of Erasmus, appeared in 1861. His later novels, with one notable exception, *Griffith Gaunt*, mark a decline. They include *Hard Cash*, an attack on private asylums; *Put Yourself in his Place*; and *The Perilous Secret*. Reade as a novelist was most unequal; his love for the stage had a bad influence upon his novels, which are at their best in those parts which the stage could not affect, especially in their narratives of action. In this respect some passages of Reade are not only unsurpassed but unequalled. In most of his novels there is much that is vulgar, ludicrous, and trivial. Once and once only he managed to hit the centre of the target. *The Cloister and the Hearth* challenges *Esmond* for the first place among our historical novels. Reade was a painstaking worker, and accumulated classified facts, ideas, and statistics in a number of colossal ledgers, all elaborately indexed. There was even an index to the indexes. He did not see that truth to fact and truth to art were not

the same thing. Had he been ignorant of the artificialities of contemporary drama, he might have ranked among our foremost novelists.

Richard Doddridge Blackmore (1825–1900) was, to his own chagrin, regarded as the author of one book — *Lorna Doone* — but he has many novels to his credit and some of them, for example *Springhaven* and *The Maid of Sker*, are as good as his better-known book. Blackmore was educated at Blundell's School and at Exeter College, Oxford; he was called to the Bar and practised for some time as a conveyancer, but was obliged for reasons of health to abandon his practice, and settled down to the double career of market-gardener and novelist. He himself set more store by his work in the former capacity, and at one time grew as many as six hundred varieties of pears. *Lorna Doone* has justly won the pre-eminence among his works; it is more a prose epic or saga than a novel, and played no small part in the revival of the romance. It has endeared itself and Exmoor to hundreds of thousands of readers.

Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield (1804–1881), who was twice Prime Minister, had a literary career almost as amazing as his career in politics. When a young man of twenty-one he published *Vivian Grey*, a daring and impudent book which won him some notoriety. In 1831 another novel, *The Young Duke*, came from his pen. It was followed by *Contarini Fleming*, *Henrietta Temple*, and *Venetia*. His best novels, though, as is natural, centre round political life; especially notable are *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*. These novels may still be read with interest for their political wisdom, their epigrammatic brilliance, the light which they throw upon their distinguished author, and their daring introduction of real characters under thin dis-

guises. For twenty-three years Disraeli's career as an author was swamped by his extraordinary political career; but in 1870 he published *Lothair*, perhaps the most brilliant of all his novels. As the work of an ex-Premier it won instant success; it is brilliantly written and teems with charmingly malicious portraits. In 1880 Parliament was rather suddenly dissolved, and, the new Parliament showing an overwhelming Liberal majority, Disraeli (now Earl of Beaconsfield) resigned office. About this time, wishing to buy a house in London, he sold the manuscript of another novel, *Endymion*, which had been written some time before; it is said to have fetched £10,000. It is not as good as *Lothair*, but has brilliant portraits in plenty. Dickens and Thackeray both appear in it.

Disraeli might have ranked among our greatest novelists had not other and more urgent work absorbed his energies. His style has numerous faults; he is too splendid, dazzling, and gorgeous; sometimes he is tawdry and vulgar; at other times he is flat. But his epigrammatic wit and his clearness of vision are at times irresistible. His genius has made his political novels, if no more of his works, of permanent interest.

Mrs. Gaskell (1810–1865), whose father and husband were both Unitarian ministers, wrote her first novel, *Mary Barton*, to distract her mind after the death of her infant son. It was based upon the struggle then (1848) rife in Lancashire between workmen and employers. Its success was almost sensational, owing to its choice of subject; it was not her most artistic but was her most celebrated work, and was translated into most European languages, including Finnish. Mrs. Gaskell was thoroughly appreciated by Dickens, who invited her to contribute to *Household Words*. *Lizzie Leigh* accordingly appeared in the opening numbers of that

periodical (1850), and the more celebrated *Cranford*, a series of sketches rather than a novel, was published in it between December, 1851, and May, 1853. It at once took its place as a classic. *Ruth* appeared in 1853, and *North and South* two years later. *Sylvia's Lovers*, a story of press-gang days, appeared in 1863; as did the beautiful prose idyll *Cousin Phillis*, a long short-story rather than a novel (in the *Cornhill Magazine*). Her last novel, *Wives and Daughters*, which was not finished, came out in the same magazine between August, 1864, and January, 1866. Mrs. Gaskell's reputation was perhaps lowered by her versatility. The public prefers an author who can be accurately ticketed as belonging to this, that, or the other class. Mrs. Gaskell excelled in the social novel, the problem novel, the prose idyll, and the gentle comedy novel; she was a first-rate biographer, and had no small skill in tales of the supernatural and horrible.

An admirable writer of sensational novels was **William Wilkie Collins** (1824–1889), the son of a well-known artist. He was an intimate friend of Dickens, with whom he collaborated in several stories (*The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, *No Thoroughfare*, etc.). Collins contributed to *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*; indeed his best work appeared in those periodicals. He wrote much, considering that his health was weak, but his best books are *The Woman in White*, *No Name*, and *The Moonstone*. His volume of short stories, *After Dark*, is likewise excellent. His other books are not on the same level, and at their worst read like intentional parodies of his best work. His mystery-stories are remarkable for their ingenious construction; they are carefully plotted, accurate, orderly, and well-knit. Since he wrote, thrillers and detective-stories have grown to an innumerable legion; but it is doubtful if

anything has been written in this kind which is superior to *The Moonstone*.

Charlotte (1816-1855), Emily (1818-1848), and Anne (1820-1849) Brontë were the daughters of the Rev. Patrick Brontë, the perpetual curate of Haworth, a moorland village in the West Riding of Yorkshire. His wife died *in 1821, leaving him with six small children, the eldest* of whom was barely eight. He packed his four eldest daughters away to school at Cowan's Bridge at an early age; the two elder girls died less than a year afterwards, *directly or indirectly as a result of the school's Spartan régime*. They were aged eleven and ten. Charlotte was thus, at the age of nine, left the eldest daughter of the motherless family. Her only brother Branwell was a poor creature who eventually became a victim to drink, opium, and self-conceit, and was the cause of unspeakable misery to his family. The three sisters all attempted to earn their livelihood by teaching; with a view to improving themselves in French and German, Charlotte and Emily went to Brussels for a few months, where Charlotte developed her mental faculties with astonishing speed. In 1844 they attempted to set up a school at Haworth, but could not get any pupils. In 1846 a volume of poems by the three sisters was published, *under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton* Bell. The volume, which was issued at their own risk, attracted little attention. They then quitted poetry for prose-fiction, and produced each a novel. Charlotte's novel, *The Professor*, founded upon her Brussels experiences, was refused by several publishers, and did not appear until after her death. Messrs Smith and Elder, however, so worded their refusal (which was mainly on the score of length, the three-volume standard being then universally enforced) as to encourage her to complete *Jane Eyre*, which they accepted and published

in 1847. Its success was instantaneous and extraordinary. *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily, and *Agnes Grey*, by Anne, were published together (they made three volumes together) later in the same year. Anne published her other novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, in 1848. Misfortunes now gathered round the family. The wretched Branwell died in September, 1848, the resolute and taciturn Emily in December, 1848, and the gentle and affectionate Anne in May, 1849. Charlotte was thus the sole survivor of the family of six. In spite of her sorrow, she published *Shirley*, in some respects the best of her novels, in October, 1849. Literary fame was now hers, but her material, based as it was upon her own experience, was running short. Her last novel, *Villette*, founded upon her experiences at Brussels and making some use of the still unpublished *Professor*, appeared at the end of 1852. In 1854 she married her father's curate, but died less than a year later, at the age of thirty-nine.

The story of the Brontës, even without the embroideries which have inevitably embellished it, is one of the most tragic stories of real life, and there is no doubt that many readers find Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* as enthralling as any of the seven novels written by the three sisters. Of the three Charlotte is probably the greatest; Emily, however, was the most remarkable character, and wrote a few inspired poems and one extraordinarily powerful novel. *Wuthering Heights* is badly constructed, sinister, and repellent, but has a strong appeal for many readers. Its truth is the truth of poetry, not that of romance. Anne's two novels are mediocre and have no outstanding merit; they would have been forgotten but for the work of her sisters and for their connexion with the Brontë legend. Charlotte's three novels have appealed in different ways

to different readers; *Jane Eyre* has had the widest popular appeal; *Shirley* has pleased many discriminating readers; professional critics have often given the palm to *Villette*. *The Professor*, which we may perhaps regard as having been scrapped by its author, has fewer admirers, though it has merits of its own. The success of *Jane Eyre* marked the advent of the novel of nature and passion, of the novel which dealt with the inner life. Charlotte Brontë drew too much upon her own experience; some of her portraits are mere photographs; she harped too often on the one string. But her candour, her sympathy, and her passionate heart set her, if not quite at the head, at least in the vanguard of English women-novelists.

Mary Ann Evans, known to literature as "George Eliot" (1819-1880), was the daughter of a land-agent, and was born at Arbury Farm, Warwickshire. She was highly intellectual and studious, and became assistant-editor of the *Westminster Review*. In 1857 she first came prominently before the public by publishing in *Blackwood's Magazine* the three tales which were soon after collected and published as *Scenes of Clerical Life*. It was at once recognized that a new novelist of the first class had arisen; there are traces of immaturity in the book, but in some respects she never surpassed it. Her next book, *Adam Bede* (1859), sustained her reputation among the critics and extended it among the general public. It is still the popular favourite among her novels; nor did she ever create a more lively character than Mrs. Poyser. *The Mill on the Floss*, a novel with a fine semi-autobiographical beginning and an unsatisfactory ending, appeared in 1860. In 1861 she wrote her most charming short tale, *Silas Marner*, the most flawless of her works. From this time onwards she drew her inspiration less and less from her memory

and experiences, and more and more from reading and research, with somewhat unhappy results. *Romola*, an historical novel dealing with Florence in the time of Savonarola, appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1862–63. It was written with pain and tribulation, and, fine novel though it is, it does not give unalloyed pleasure to its readers. *Felix Holt*, an earnest but unattractive political novel, appeared in 1866. *Middlemarch*, a much better but somewhat heavy novel, appeared in parts in 1871 and 1872. Her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, is somewhat dry and is filled with semi-scientific jargon.

In her earlier works, in which she depicted Warwickshire life and revived the memories of her girlhood, George Eliot has few equals. Her characters and scenes live, her dialogue sparkles, her narrative never hangs fire. In her later novels, her genius is strangled by her learning. She not only " read up " assiduously for these novels, but introduced into them a dreary system of philosophy which was never attractive and has not now even the charm of novelty. She was undoubtedly a woman of genius, but her genius was marred by her intellectualism. She teaches us most when she does not attempt to teach at all.

One of the most genial and attractive of the Victorian novelists is **Anthony Trollope** (1815–1882), the son of a briefless barrister and of a remarkable woman who wrote in all some 115 volumes after she was fifty-two years of age. Trollope was educated at Winchester and at Harrow, where he had a miserable existence as a day-boy and learnt next to nothing. When he was nineteen he was appointed to a clerkship in the Post Office; he was not considered a very promising junior, but as soon as he accepted a Post Office surveyorship in Ireland his fortunes began to mend. He was an active and efficient civil servant for thirty-three years, introducing many

new ideas (including the pillar-box) into his department. His official duties kept him for several years in Ireland, took him all over the west of England and South Wales, and eventually carried him abroad on trips to the West Indies and elsewhere. A life of this kind suited his temperament admirably, and provided him with abundant material for novels and books of travel. His first two novels, which had Irish settings, fell flat; and it was not until the publication of *The Warden* (1855) that Trollope became known. This was the first of the series of Barsetshire novels, a series which alone of Trollope's writings suffered from a partial not a total eclipse after his death. The other members of the series are: *Barchester Towers, Doctor Thorne, Framley Parsonage, The Small House at Allington,* and *The Last Chronicle of Barset.* It is impossible here to enumerate all his other novels, which are upwards of fifty in number; amongst the best of them are: *The Three Clerks, Orley Farm, The Claverings, Phineas Finn, The Vicar of Bullhampton, The Prime Minister,* and *The Duke's Children.*

Trollope wrote too much and too fluently; but his best work is very good, resembling that of Jane Austen, though his canvas is larger and his brush coarser. He has been accused of being a realist; it has been said of him that he never creates, he only depicts, and that his books are mere transcripts from life. This is not true; he was a day-dreamer, who had a happy knack of being able to commit his dreams to paper. He is pleasantly free from exaggeration; his pages depict no monsters of virtue or vice. He manages his plots adroitly; he has the greatest gift which a story-teller can possess — that of keeping his readers interested and in keen suspense about some incident which is in itself trivial. Two of his characters at least — Josiah Crawley and Mrs. Proudie — are fit to stand beside any characters in

English fiction. He gives a most faithful picture of the society of his time.

George Meredith (1828–1909), the son of a naval outfitter, was educated at a Moravian school at Neuwied on the Rhine. On his return he was articled to a solicitor, and made many friends among literary people. Among them was the novelist T. L. Peacock, whose widowed daughter he married. He then abandoned law and turned to journalism and literature for a livelihood. For more than thirty years he was literary adviser to Messrs. Chapman and Hall. During the last years of his life he was generally recognized as the most prominent man-of-letters in England. He was chosen to succeed Tennyson as President of the Authors' Society; he held the gold medal of the Royal Society of Literature; and he was given the Order of Merit in 1905.

After writing two tales which somewhat resembled those of his father-in-law Peacock, Meredith wrote his first important book, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, in 1859. It was followed by *Evan Harrington*, *Sandra Belloni*, *Emilia in England*, *Rhoda Fleming*, *Vittoria*, *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*, *Beauchamp's Career*, *The Egoist*, *Diana of the Crossways*, *One of ou Conquerors*, and others. About Meredith's position as novelist there can be no two opinions. He stands in th front rank, with five or six others. He has never bee widely popular, which is not surprising seeing that never aimed at popularity, but he is the favourite "that acute and honourable minority which consents be thwacked with aphorisms and sentences and a fa tastic delivery of the verities". His novels are certai not always easy reading, but their difficulty has b much exaggerated. Sometimes his method of narra by allusion makes his plots, usually good in themse difficult to follow. He is not liked by those who

novels for the story, or who regard them as merely a form of entertainment or an antidote for boredom. It is in character-drawing, especially in portraying women, and in describing the manifold variety of nature that he excels. He is the most intellectual of the Victorians. Much light is thrown on his theory of art by his *Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit*; the Comic Spirit, he says, arouses thoughtful laughter, prevents us from taking ourselves too seriously, and destroys the bugbear of sentimentalism. Meredith's witty and cosmopolitan Muse directed her attacks frequently upon some of our insularities, and in the most urbane way furthered the cause of sanity and sincerity. Meredith was a true artist; he could almost certainly have attained wealth and a life of leisure if he had written down to the popular level; but this he never condescended to do.

Henry James (1843-1916), an American who became a naturalized British subject a few months before his death in February, 1916, is another novelist who wrote for the few rather than for the many. He was the son of a writer on theological matters, and was educated in a cosmopolitan but desultory fashion at New York, London, Paris, and Geneva. At a most impressionable age he was imbued with a love for Europe which almost amounted to a passion, and at the age of thirty-two he finally settled in Europe. His life, apart from the publication of his books, was uneventful. He was a prolific author, writing in all some twenty novels, almost a hundred short stories, several volumes of sketches of travel and literary criticism, and a few quite unsuccessful plays. His principal novels are: *Roderick Hudson*, the book which first made him widely known; *The American*; *Daisy Miller*; *The Spoils of Poynton*; *What Maisie Knew*; *The Wings of the Dove*; *The Ambassa-*

dors; and *The Golden Bowl.* James was an acute and untiring psychologist who carried the analytical novel as far as it could decently go, perhaps somewhat farther. His earlier novels suffer from thinness, and all of them suffer from a lack of action and an abundance of hair-splitting. Many of his novels and short stories turn on the contrast between Americans visiting Europe and the natives of the countries they are visiting. James was a literary artist and was master of a finished and delicate style, but his thought is often perplexing and expressed too allusively. He had not the cleverness which conceals cleverness. His work has not in it the qualities which gain widespread popularity, but has been widely admired by those who are interested in psychology, and by novelists especially. The prefaces which he wrote for the collected editions of his novels and tales throw valuable light not only on his own writings but on the craft of fiction in general.

At one time it was customary to associate the name of **Thomas Hardy** (1840–1928) with that of George Meredith, though in truth their novels have nothing in common, save a certain element of greatness. Hardy, a Dorsetshire man, was educated at local schools and privately, and began life as an architect. His first published novel (he suppressed an earlier one) was *Desperate Remedies*, a not very characteristic novel, in which plot takes precedence over all other features. In 1872 he published *Under the Greenwood Tree*, a novel which, in the opinion of some of his admirers, he never surpassed, and which won him straight away a place in the van of living novelists. It was followed by *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Hand of Ethelberta*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Trumpet-Major*, *A Laodicean*, *Two on a Tower*, *The Woodlanders*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*. After

He then returned to England and settled at Clifford's Inn, studying painting and occasionally exhibiting at the Royal Academy. He was a writer of great versatility, but his attractive travel-books, his writings on evolution, and his attempts to prove that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman and to solve the mystery surrounding Shakespeare's *Sonnets* need not be discussed here. He made three contributions to fiction—*Erewhon* (1872), *Erewhon Revisited* (1901), and his novel *The Way of All Flesh*. *Erewhon*, though patchy as a whole (it was reassembled from certain magazine articles), is freshly and vivaciously written; its purely narrative passages are good. Its sequel is a little drier in its satire, but is much better constructed. Both books suggest, to their detriment, a comparison with Swift. *The Way of All Flesh* was written between 1872 and 1885, but was not published until 1903, when Butler was dead. It is a somewhat unseemly autobiography in disguise; it suggests that Butler had small respect for the Fifth Commandment. It has been overpraised and has been sedulously quarried by certain authors who wished to appear smart without an inconvenient expenditure of trouble. Perhaps the best of Butler is to be found in his rather delightful *Note-books*, selections from which were published in 1912.

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), the son of a celebrated Edinburgh engineer, was feeble and sickly from his earliest days, and spent many of the forty-four years of his life in the pursuit of health, which he never found. His schooling was necessarily intermittent; after leaving school, he began to study for the family profession, engineering, but he abandoned it, was called to the Scottish Bar, and devoted himself to literature. He wrote many charming little books of essays and books of travel; but only his fiction can be dealt with here.

The New Arabian Nights, a not quite successful series of fantastic modern tales, appeared in *Lond n*. His longer fantastic tale, *Prince Otto*, has been acclaimed as his best work, but it is too remote from real life to satisfy the majority of readers. *Treasure Island* (originally known as *The Sea-Cook*) appeared as a serial in *Young Folks* in 1882, badly printed on bad paper. This fine tale was the first of Stevenson's works to make him widely popular, which it did as soon as it appeared in book form (1883). Another boys' tale, *The Black Arrow*, was unaccountably preferred by some critics (not by its author) to its predecessor. In 1886 his famous apologue, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, appeared, and being well advertised from innumerable pulpits, increased immensely his reputation and the sale of his other books. The same year saw the publication of his great romance *Kidnapped*. In the following year Stevenson left Europe for ever, finally settling in Samoa, where he died suddenly in 1894 Among his later publications are: *The Wrong Box*, a farcical tale in which his stepson collaborated; *The Master of Ballantrae*, a romance; *The Wrecker*, a modern novel in which his stepson collaborated; *Catriona*, a sequel to *Kidnapped*; and *The Ebb-Tide*, in which his stepson collaborated. *St Ives*, an unfinished romance of less distinction than his other tales, was published posthumously, the concluding chapters being written by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch *Weir of Hermiston*, the greatest of his novels, upon which he was working a few hours before his death, is a magnificent fragment, being only about a quarter of its intended length.

As a novelist, Stevenson is always at his best when his characters are on Scottish soil; this is strikingly apparent in *The Master of Ballantrae*, where the Scottish scenes are incomparable and the American scenes of no

outstanding merit. He was undoubtedly the most admired author of his generation; and few authors of any age or nation have won to the same extent the personal affection of their readers. His life is studied almost as enthusiastically as his writings.

George Gissing (1857–1903), the son of a pharmaceutical chemist, was educated at Owens College, Manchester, which he left without a degree, but with considerable attainments in classical scholarship. He went to America for a time, his occupations varying from teaching to gasfitting; in 1877 he returned to Europe and studied German metaphysics at Jena. For years he supported himself by teaching and writing under very adverse circumstances, continually suffering from poverty, and too proud to earn a livelihood by journalism, as he undoubtedly could have done. His first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, was published at his own expense in 1880. Lower middle-class life, the monotony of the lives of workers and of the shabby genteel, the suffering of souls in sordid environment, were the subjects which Gissing depicted in his subsequent novels, *The Unclassed*, *Demos*, *Thyrza*, *The Nether World*, *New Grub Street*, and *The Odd Women*, all gloomy and joyless, but all poignantly realistic and inspired by a moral idea. A brighter mood is revealed in his semi-autobiographical *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Gissing's novels are at once depressing and stimulating; he was master of a fine style; and there are indications that, had he lived longer, he might have written a completely satisfactory novel.

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), son of the curator of the Lahore Museum, was born at Bombay and educated at the United Services College, Westward Ho, North Devon. At the age of seventeen he returned to India, and became assistant-editor of the *Civil and*

was followed by *Villa Rubein*, *A Man of Devon*, and *The Island Pharisees.* His best-known and best work, known collectively as *The Forsyte Saga*, consists of the following parts, written between 1906 and 1921: *The Man of Property*, *The Indian Summer of a Forsyte*, *In Chancery*, *Awakening*, and *To Let.* A second series, known as *A Modern Comedy* and consisting of *The White Monkey*, *The Silver Spoon*, and *Swan Song*, appeared between 1924 and 1928, and attempted less successfully to deal with post-war England. His other novels include *The Country House*, *The Patrician*, and *The Dark Flower*, and he also wrote some admirable short stories, collected as *Caravan.* He was an earnest and sincere writer; but his sympathy for the downtrodden and the poor was in excess of his knowledge of them. He was a shy man, with the virtues and limitations of the Public School and University class, so that some of his work is marred by a lack of knowledge of how the other half of the world lived. In *The Forsyte Saga*, however, he has drawn an elaborate and almost perfect picture of how the upper middle-classes lived in Victorian days and after; this book, or rather series of books, will almost certainly be read for many generations to come on account of its delineation of a way of life which one war profoundly modified and the other ended.

Arnold Bennett (1867–1931), the son of a solicitor, was born at Hanley, Staffordshire, and was educated at Newcastle Middle School. After spending a few years in a lawyer's office, he became assistant-editor of *Woman* in 1893; three years later he became editor, but resigned in 1900 in order to devote himself to literature. He was a prolific writer; much of his work is merely clever journalism, but he has written several novels of real excellence. His writings include: *A Man from the*

North, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, *Anna of the Five Towns*, *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns*, *The Old Wives' Tale*, the trilogy *Clayhanger*, *Hilda Lessways*, and *These Twain*, *The Card*, *The Regent*, *The Pretty Lady*, *Riceyman Steps*, and *Lord Raingo*. The best item in this very miscellaneous bag is *The Old Wives' Tale*, a remarkable novel and one of the best books written in the reign of Edward VII; the second best item is *Clayhanger*, whose two companion novels are of much less interest. Bennett was at his best when indulging his fantastic humour, or when writing about the Five Towns, a part of England which he has made his own as securely as Hardy has appropriated Wessex.

Herbert George Wells (1866–), the son of a professional cricketer, was educated at Midhurst Grammar School. For a time he was employed in a drapery shop, but was able, by means of scholarships he had won, to study at the Royal College of Science, London. In 1890 he graduated B.Sc. with first-class honours at London University, and for several years taught biology. In 1893 he turned to journalism and literature, contributing to *Nature* and *The Saturday Review*. His first book, *Select Conversations with an Uncle*, appeared in 1895. He has handled a diversity of subjects, including science, sociology, and theology, and has produced, besides novels dealing with the lower middle-classes, works on socialism, politics, history, and theology, and a series of romances which contain sociological and scientific forecasts. His books are very numerous; only a few of the more important or typical ones can be mentioned here, such as *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *Kipps*, *Tono-Bungay*, *The History of Mr. Polly*, *Mr. Britling sees it through*, *The Outline of History*, *The World of William Clissold*, *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham*, and *The Shape of Things*

to come. In his earlier days Wells made use of his unique combination of scientific training and literary gifts to write scientific romances which make the most extravagant happenings appear plausible. After writing some novels of a more conventional type, but still essentially Wellsian and his best work, Wells produced a most varied series of books which, though sometimes approaching the novel in form, are really theological, economic, or political theses in disguise. Though Wells is deeply interested in posterity, it is not likely that posterity will reciprocate the interest, as far as these later writings are concerned. Having himself exchanged, in his youth, the chaos of a retailer's shop for the methodical tidiness of a laboratory, Wells is anxious to see the world exchange haphazard methods for systems. He is of the opinion that if men know what is right, they will do it; but this opinion is not confirmed by a glance at the continent of Europe in the present day. Wells is not likely to win permanent fame as a philosopher, theologian, sociologist, or even historian, though his *Outline of History* (which he undertook only after having failed to persuade others whom he considered more highly qualified for the task to perform it) is a nobly-planned book, if imperfect in details. He will be remembered as a writer of romances, as (in his early days) a master of the short story, and as a witty and accomplished novelist. As novelist and humorist he ranks high, although he has not created any real characters. *Kipps*, *Tono-Bungay* (an almost perfect picture of its time), and *Mr. Polly* will probably outlive all his latter-day sermons. Wells's extraordinarily alert and active mind has had a profoundly stimulating effect upon his generation; indeed it has affected not only the great mass of the reading public, but also the small minority of those who profess that they do not admire Wells's work.

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), whose name in full was Feodor Josef Konrad Korzeniowski, was the son of a Polish man of letters of liberal political views, and was born in the Ukraine. He spent his youth at Cracow, and at the age of seventeen went to Marseilles, where he joined the French merchant service. In 1878 he landed at Lowestoft, subsequently became a mate on an English ship, and a master in 1884. His first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, appeared in 1895. It was fairly successful, and not long after its publication he gave up the sea, settled in Kent, and devoted himself to writing. His progress was slow, as he was a fastidious writer and had not a ready pen. His novels include: *An Outcast of the Islands*; *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, his own favourite, *Lord Jim*; *Youth*; *Typhoon*; *Nostromo*, his best work in the opinion of many; *Chance*, his first book to become widely popular; *Victory*, *The Arrow of Gold*; *The Rescue*; and *The Rover*. Although Conrad was twenty-one before he learned English, he nevertheless acquired a wonderful style, strong and idiomatic, which was improved by his thorough knowledge of several other languages, especially French. He is always at his happiest when dealing with seafaring life, the details of which he knew so intimately. His short stories are no less masterly than his novels. In both he showed himself able to tread the narrow path which lies between excess of realism on the one side and excess of romance on the other.

George Moore (1852–1933), the son of an Irish landowner and member of parliament, was born at Moore Hall, Ballyglass, Co. Mayo, and educated at Oscott. He intended to become a painter, and studied in the art schools at Paris, but gradually discovered that literature was his true bent. His first novel, *A Modern Lover*, was followed by *A Mummer's Wife*, a highly

original piece of realistic work. Among his other novels are: *Esther Waters*, *Evelyn Innes*, *Sister Teresa*, *The Brook Kerith*, and *Heloise and Abelard*. He gradually acquired a beautiful style, and he had a high sense of artistry. In *The Brook Kerith* he daringly handled the Gospel story and was abundantly justified in his temerity. His early work had a profound influence on the development of the realistic novel, and *A Mummer's Wife* directly inspired Arnold Bennett to write his best novels, those of life in the Five Towns.

William Somerset Maugham (1874–) was educated at King's School, Canterbury, Heidelberg University, and St. Thomas's Hospital, and practised as a doctor until the success of *Liza of Lambeth* enabled him to devote his entire time to literature. His other novels include *Mrs. Craddock*, *Of Human Bondage* (his best), *The Painted Veil*, *Ashenden*, and *Cakes and Ale*. He has travelled widely and observed acutely; and the scene of some of his best work is laid in China and Malaya. He has developed a most attractive economy in the use of words; and few English authors equal him in saying exactly what he wants to say. In this quality he resembles Swift, whom he also resembles in a certain ruthlessness, and in an air of disillusionment. He appears to have studied his characters in the same way in which he studied anatomical specimens in his student days. His books have achieved great popularity; but he is a far more accomplished literary artist than most writers of popular books.

Charles Edward Montague (1867–1928) graduated with distinction at Oxford, and was for most of his life on the staff of *The Manchester Guardian*. Although over forty-seven years of age, he joined the army on the outbreak of war in 1914; his war experiences and disillusionments inspired most of the novels and short

stories which he wrote. His writings include *Disenchantment*, a series of essays; *Fiery Particles*; *Rough Justice*; and *Right off the Map*, a fantasia. His essays are better than his short stories, and his short stories are better than his novels; he lacked some of the qualities of a first-rate novelist; but he was a man of unusual gifts and of sterling character, and all his writings appealed to the post-1914–18-war generation.

Edward Morgan Forster (1879–) was educated at Tonbridge and at King's College, Cambridge, the college which, more than any of the other seventeen Cambridge colleges, has upheld the theory that men are all the better if they are not all cut to the same pattern. Forster is highly original, and his novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread, The Longest Journey, A Room with a View, Howards End*, and *A Passage to India* are unlike the novels of anyone else. Forster is a thoughtful and rather cold writer; in ways he is more a scholar than a novelist, and he deplores the necessity for having a story in a novel. Yet his novels are full of violence and sensational interest. It is perhaps to this paradoxical nature of his writings that he owes his charm. He is a novelist for the few rather than for the many; but the few value his work highly.

Sir Hugh Walpole (1884–1941), the son of a Bishop of Edinburgh, was educated at King's School, Canterbury, and at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He was a prolific and competent writer, and never wrote a bad book, though it is uncertain which of his numerous volumes will survive, if any do. He first made his name with *The Wooden Horse, Maradick at Forty*, and *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill*, a rather highly-coloured story of enmity between two members of the staff of a public school. *His most famous novel is The Cathedral*, in writing which he was obviously following in the footsteps of

Trollope, whom he admired and whose biography wrote; but his book is at once more sophisticated an less lovable than Trollope's Barsetshire series. His mc ambitious effort was the series of four *Rogue Hern* novels, which endeavoured to portray one fami through several generations. It is a solid and impressiv performance, but perhaps displays efficiency and ass duity rather than consummate literary powers. It is grandly-conceived and well-executed piece of work.

John Boynton Priestley (1894–), the son of schoolmaster, was educated at Bradford and at Trinit Hall, Cambridge. In 1929 he scored a sensational succes with his novel *The Good Companions*, a novel on a larg scale, like those of Fielding and Dickens. That succes he has not repeated, though *Angel Pavement*, *Faraway*, *They Walk in the City*, and other novels have merit, and merit of a highly original kind. The mere fact that *The Good Companions* was so popular caused it to be con- demned by the less intelligent type of literary critic but it has given pleasure to many thousands of readers and helped them to realize that life is an adventure Whether it will survive is uncertain; it is certain th many less admirable novels have survived.

A novelist whose books have aroused unbound enthusiasm in some readers and intense dislike in oth is **David Herbert Lawrence** (1885–1930). He the son of a Nottinghamshire coal-miner, and educated at Nottingham High School and Univers After a brief experience of teaching, the success of first novel, *The White Peacock*, enabled him to de himself entirely to literature. Lawrence was a lonel unhappy man; he was for many years threatened consumption, of which he eventually died; h deeply the horror and wastage of the 1914–18 w the more deeply because his wife was German);

in his unusual combination of wisdom and learning he is the most accomplished spokesman of his generation.

Readers of *Gulliver's Travels* will remember that one of the professors at the Grand Academy of Lagado invented a machine by means of which the most ignorant person, with a little bodily labour, might write books on philosophy, poetry, politics, laws, mathematics, and theology, without the least assistance from genius or study. A large frame was covered with innumerable small bits of wood, with paper pasted on them, upon which were written all the words of their language in their several moods, tenses, and declensions, but without any order. A handle was turned; the whole disposition of the words was entirely changed; and some of the professor's pupils wrote down any three or four words which might make part of a sentence. "The professor showed me several volumes in large folio, already collected, of broken sentences, which he intended to piece together, and, out of those rich materials, to give the world a complete body of all arts and sciences." Certain modern writers apparently entertain the idea that novels can be composed by methods not dissimilar to those of Swift's professor. Their great exemplar is **James Joyce** (1882–1941), who was born in Dublin and educated for the priesthood at Clongowes Wood College, Belvedere College, and the Royal University, Dublin, but who became a teacher of English and lived much abroad, at Paris, Rome, Trieste, and Zürich. His *Dubliners*, grim but able sketches of slum life, was followed by the semi-autobiographical *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* That was followed by the much less intelligible *Ulysses,* which in its turn was followed, seventeen years later, by the almost unintelligible *Finnegan's Wake.* Joyce was a clever and original man, and it is possible to derive some sense and some

and Denham are instances of this. Others, such as Bunyan and Defoe, whose writings were considered in their day as beneath the dignity of literature, have more devoted readers now than they had in their lifetime. There are great men living and writing to-day, but we are too close to them to see them in proper perspective. The long tradition of English Literature is in no danger of being broken. If we could see into the future, we would say, with Macbeth,

"What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom!"

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